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Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE

Farrukh Ḥusayn

(1,980 words)

Farrukh Ḥusayn, also called Farrukh Beg, was a painter active in Iran, Khurāsān, and the Subcontinent between about 988/1580 and 1030/1620–1. His identity is debated, but the current consensus is that one person, known as Farrukh Ḥusayn or Farrukh Beg, worked in five royal contexts: Ṣafavid Khurāsān, the kingdom of Kabul, ‘Ādil Shāhī Bijāpūr, and Mughal India (twice, with interruption).

Little is known about Farrukh’s early life in Şafavid Iran. Iskandar Beg Munshī’s (d. c.1042/1632) history of the Şafavids mentions two painters—Siyāvush, of Georgian origin, and his brother, Farrukh Beg—who became the “trusted companions” (*mu’tamidān*) of the heir apparent Ḥamza Mīrzā (d. 994/1586) (Soudavar, *Between the Safavids and the Mughals*, 55). Although no signed work by Farrukh from this period is extant, he has been credited with illustrations in *Haft awrang* (“Seven thrones”) manuscripts made for Ḥamza Mīrzā and Ibrāhīm Mīrzā (d. 984/1577), governor of Mashhad (Soudavar, *Between the Safavids and the Mughals*, 56–7; Soudavar, *The age of Muhammadi*, 65–6). Evidence of the artist’s Kabul period includes two tinted-drawing portraits of Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥākīm (d. 993/1585), younger brother of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 963–1014/1556–1605). One is dated 992/1584–5 and signed “drawn (*ḥarrarahu*) by the sinful Farrukh Ḥusayn, the painter (*muṣavvir*)” [Illustration 1]; the other “drawn (*rāqamahu*) by Farrukh Ḥusayn” (Beach, *Farrukh Beg*, fig. 1).



Illustration 1. “Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥākīm with Ḥājī Yāqūt,” signed by Farrukh Ḥusayn, Kabul, 992/1584–5. Folio from the *Salīm/Jahāngīr*

Upon Mīrzā Ḥākīm's death, Farrukh Beg entered Akbar's service at Rawalpindi (Abū l-Faḏl, 3:713–4). Paintings ascribed to the artist (*amal*, “work,” and/or *ṭarḥ*, “design”) and sometimes lauding him as *nādir al-‘aṣr* (wonder of the age) appear in well-known manuscripts of the *Akbarnāma*, *Bāburnāma*, *Khamṣa* (“Quintet”) of Niḏāmī (d. 606/1209), *Dīvān* (poetry collection) of Ḥāfiḏ (d. 792/1390), and *Khamṣa* of Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī (d. 725/1325). Farrukh's indebtedness to Khurāsān is most visible in his paintings in the 978–9/1570–2 *Khamṣa* of Dihlavī, which conform to the noble youths codified by Muḥammadi (fl. 968–99/1560–90) [Illustration 2] (see also Overton, Book culture, fig. 29), and in “Akbar's triumphal entry into Surat” [Illustration 3], which closely parallels an illustration in the *Haft awrang* (963–72/1556–65) made for Ibrāhīm Mīrzā (Simpson, fig. 76). Likewise, the architectural backdrop, figural types, and technical precision of “Bābur receives a courtier” [Illustration 4] compare to the finest products of tenth/sixteenth-century Mashhad. The conservative Persian style of some of Farrukh's ostensibly Akbar-period paintings has led to the suggestion that they may actually date to his Khurāsān or Kabul periods and were simply recycled in later Mughal manuscripts (e.g. Stronge 44, Beach 196, 100). The “Bābur” in “Bābur receives a courtier,” for example, was perhaps originally Mīrzā Ḥākīm [Illustrations 1 and 4].

In about 1004/1595–6, Farrukh migrated to Bījāpūr, a decision attributed to the incongruity of his Khurāsānī style with Akbarī realism and his possible association with the rebellious Salīm (later emperor Jahāngīr) (e.g., Skelton, Seyller, Beach). The Bījāpūrī historian Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḍuhūrī (d. 1025/1616) lauded Farrukh amongst six Iranian migrants at the court of Ibrāhīm ‘Ādil Shāh II (r. 988–1037/1580–1627) (Zuhūrī, 453–67), and at least nine paintings have been assigned to the artist's Bījāpūr period (mostly portraits of the ruler and his favourite elephant). A probable manuscript illustration of the goddess Saraswati [Illustration 5] is signed *ḥarrarahu* [?] *Farrukh Ḥusayn muṣavvir-i Ibrāhīm ‘Ādilshāhī*. Farrukh's apparent reuse of this distinct signature formula, employed at least a decade earlier in his 992/1584–5 portrait of Mīrzā Ḥākīm [Illustration 1], may have been a deliberately archaising measure in a painting rooted in Persian tropes and techniques.

album, North India, c. 1000s–1030s/late 1590s–1620s. Tehran, Gulistān Palace Library, MS 1663, fol. 199. Photograph courtesy of Keelan Overton.



Illustration 2. “Youth holding a cup,” ascribed to Farrukh Beg (at the Mughal court), Khurāsān or Lahore, c. 988–1003/1580–95. Folio from a *Khamṣa* of Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, Herat, 978–9/1570–2. Cambridge, Cambridge University, King's

Compositionally, it is indebted to Shīrāzī frontispieces of Sulaymān and Bilqīs enthroned, while technically, it exemplifies Khurāsānī precision (Overton, Book culture).

Farrukh next moved to the Mughal court. In Ramadān 1018/December 1609, the emperor Jahāngīr (r. 1014–37/1605–27) recorded that he presented “two thousand rupees to Farrukh Beg the painter, one of the peerless of the age” (Jahāngīr, 104). That the emperor was especially fond of Farrukh is confirmed by the artist’s significant representation in his famed *muraqqaʿ* (Salīm/Jahāngīr album, also known as *Muraqqaʿ-i Gulshān*, “Gulshan album”). This corpus includes a painting of a youth holding narcissus [Illustration 6], in which Farrukh translated the Khurāsānī/Muḥammadī type into Bijāpūrī visual terms, and five portraits of the artist’s various patrons: the two aforementioned tinted drawings of Mīrzā Ḥākīm [Illustration 1], two paintings of Ibrāhīm [Illustration 7] (see also Overton, Book culture, fig. 2), and a probable portrait of Jahāngīr, albeit as Prince Salīm (Beach, fig. 6 and 200, 209 n. 33). That the prince was familiar with Farrukh during his Allahabad rebellion is suggested by a drawing of a Turkmen prisoner bearing his ascription and preserved in his modest Salīm album (c. 1008–14/1600–5) (Makariou, fig. 268, left).

Several additional single-sheet paintings intended for albums (now dispersed) bear inscriptions dating to Farrukh’s final Mughal period, including ascriptions by Jahāngīr recording the artist’s age of seventy years (e.g., Stronge, pl. 91; Wright, exhibition cat. no. 53). Often combining Khurāsānī, Bijāpūrī, and Mughal tropes, these paintings, including a study of St. Jerome based on a European print [Illustration 8] (also see Overton, ‘Ali Riza, fig. 4), demonstrate Farrukh’s mastery at synthesising multiple layers of artistic reference. The final mention of Farrukh occurs in the *Iqbalnāma-yi Jahāngīrī* (1028/1619), in which the historian Mu‘tamad Khān (d. 1049/1639–40) describes him as one “who has no rival or equal in the space of the universe” (quoted in Verma, 147).

College, Pote MS 153, fol. 149r.
Photograph courtesy of King’s College.



Illustration 3. “Akbar’s triumphal entry into Surat,” ascribed to Farrukh Beg (at the Mughal court), Lahore, c. 990s/1580s. Folio from an *Akbarnāma*, Lahore, c. 994–7/1586–9. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.2:117–1896.

Although Farrukh adapted his production to appeal to various patrons, he retained a distinct stylistic identity over the course of four peripatetic decades. His most compelling images defy singular classification and are often best understood through the lens of visual translation and layered itinerant experience. His paintings warn against presuming a linear relationship between place and style while demanding a careful distinction between original production and subsequent use and reception.

Keelan Overton

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Illustration 4. “Bābur (?) receives a courtier,” attributed to Farrukh Ḥusayn/Beg, Kabul or Lahore, c. 990s/1580s. Folio from a *Bāburnāma*, Lahore, c. 997/1589. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Purchase—Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, S1986.230.

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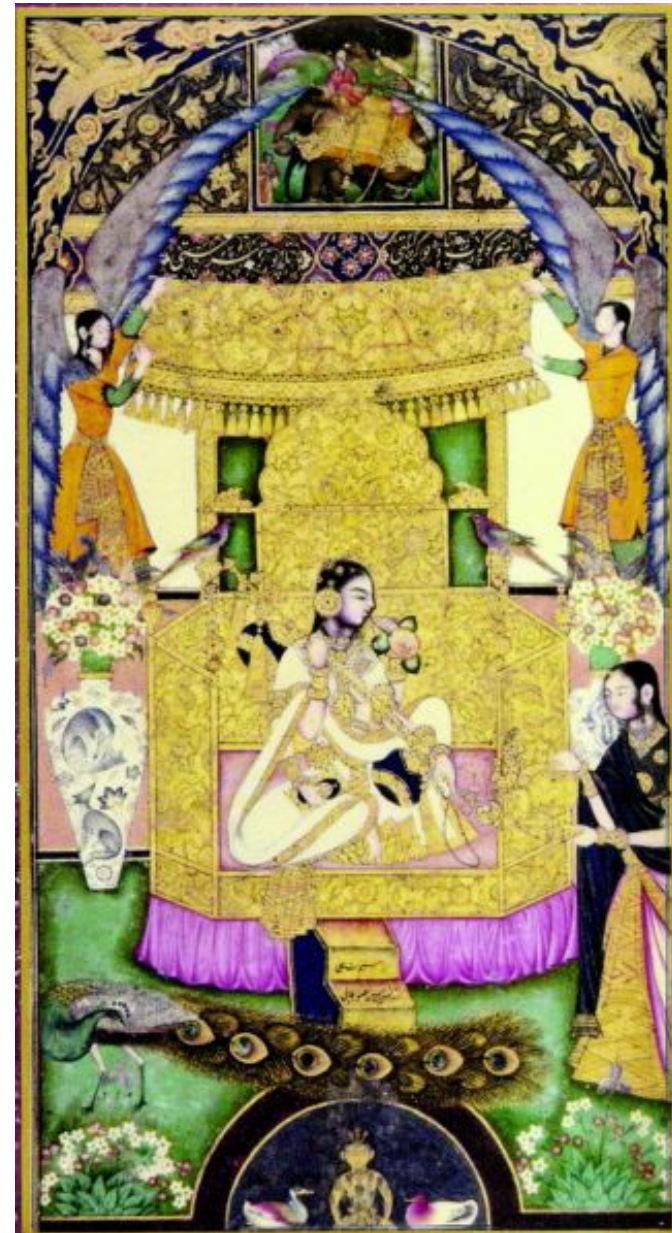


Illustration 5. "Saraswati enthroned," signed by Farrukh Husayn, Bījāpūr, c. 1003–18/1595–1609. Jaipur, Brig. Sawai Bhawani Singh of Jaipur, City Palace, JC-1/RJS.1326-RM 177. From Chandramani Singh and Madhvendra Narayan, *From the collection of Maharaja of Jaipur. Six multicoloured prints, Surat Khana, Jaipur, 16th–17th century, Mughal and Deccani* (Jaipur 2003), pl. C.

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Illustration 6. “Youth holding narcissus,” ascribed to Farrukh Beg (at the Mughal court, by Jahāngīr), probably Bijāpūr, c. 1003–18/1595–1609. Folio from the Salīm/Jahāngīr album, North India, c. 1000s–1030s/late 1590s–1620s. Tehran, Gulistān Palace Library, MS 1663, fol. 86. Photograph courtesy of Keelan Overton.

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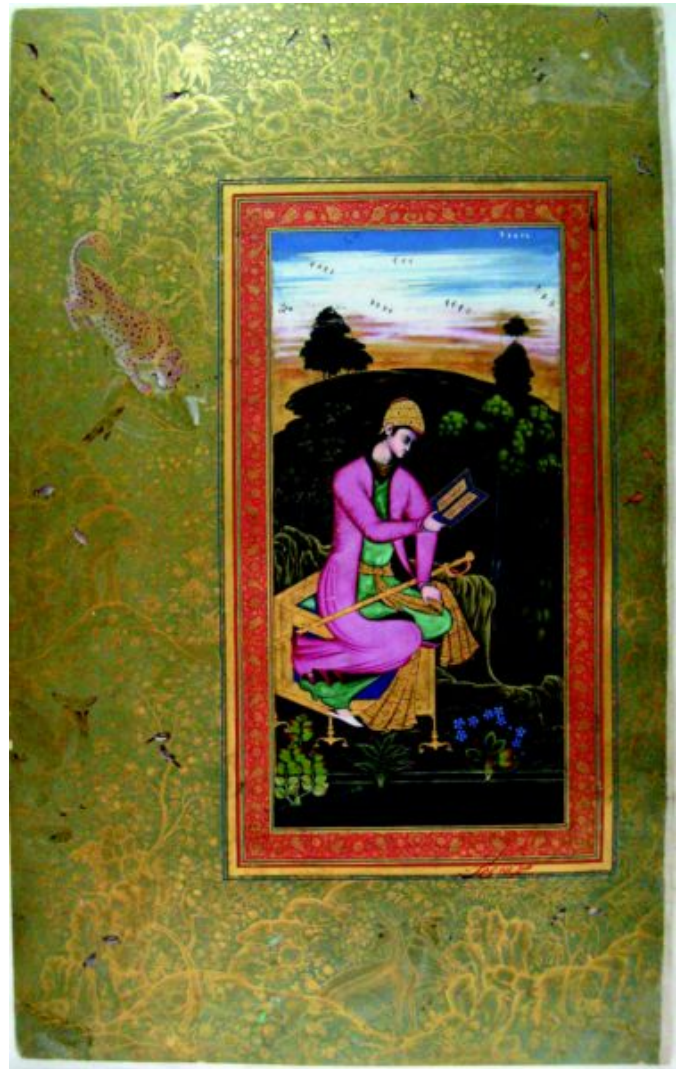


Illustration 7. “Ibrāhīm offering obeisance to Jahāngīr,” attributed to Farrukh Ḥusayn, Bījāpūr, c. 1003–18/1595–1609. Folio from the Salīm/Jahāngīr album, North India, c. 1000s–1030s/late 1590s–1620s. Tehran, Gulistān Palace Library, MS 1663, fol. 87. Photograph courtesy of Keelan Overton.

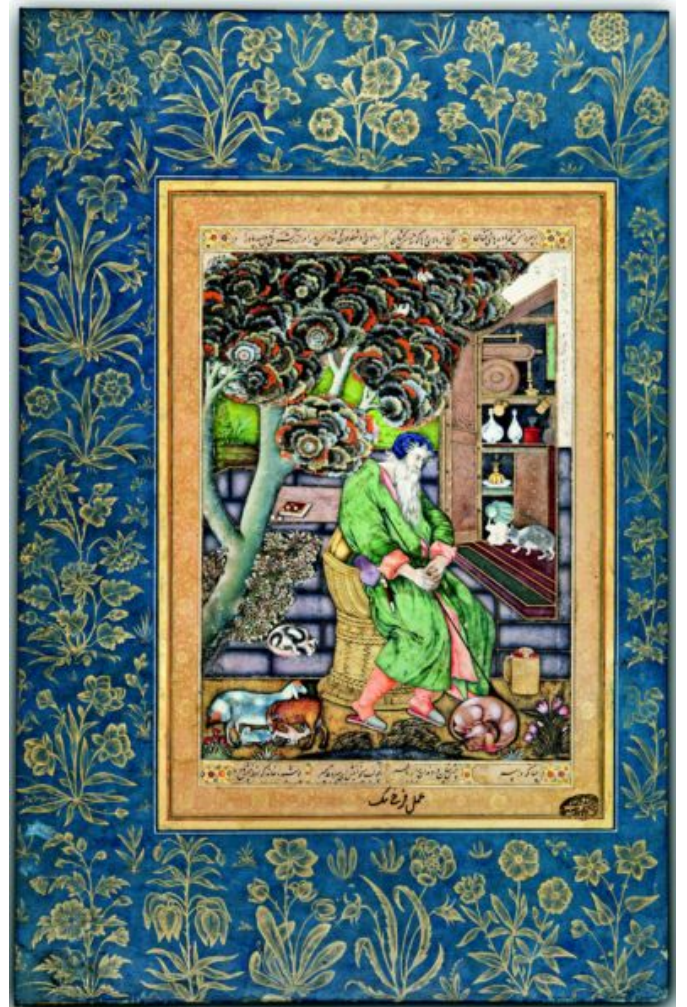


Illustration 8. “St. Jerome representing Melancholy (Dolor),” ascribed to Farrukh Beg (at the Mughal court), Bījāpūr or Agra, c. 1009–24/1600–15, presented to Jahāngīr at Ajmer in 1024/1615. Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MS 44.2007. Photograph courtesy of Marc Pelletreau.