

built an underground chamber (*tahkhāna*) of suitable width and length, and put a small door by which one could easily enter through the ceiling of that chamber. Above that ceiling he built a deep tank, filled with water. When any one desired to enter that house he had to wade through the water, reach that small door, when opened, and go that way into that chamber. Within the chamber were put all the needs of an assembly, such as carpets, books, etc. Water could not enter that chamber. It is said that one day His Majesty himself, along with his close counsellors, came through the ceiling (*kotāh*) and held an assembly there. Having stayed there, he came out the same way through that small door.<sup>68</sup>

It is not stated how water was prevented from entering the chamber, if, as one has necessarily to presume, the small door was not above the level of the water in the tank. Mu'tamad Khān, who gives us practically the same particulars as Nūru'l Haqq, assures us that 'air prevented the entry of water'.<sup>69</sup> The only conceivable way was to have an arrangement to drain away such water as entered through the door out of the chamber into a well, which could also be the source of water of the tank above. It is difficult, however, to be certain if this was what was done.

The range of Akbar's technological interests is undoubtedly impressive, from textiles to ship-building, and from cooling to gearing devices. Even if he was not the author of all the inventions which were made at his court, the spate of technological activity derived essentially from his interest and patronage. Such purposeful attention to technology had little precedent in our known history, and there came very little to match it in the subsequent period during which Europe advanced inexorably to its position of global technological supremacy.

<sup>68</sup> *Zubdatu'l Tawārīkh*, I.O.MS, Ethe 290, f.190b.

<sup>69</sup> *Iqbāl-nāma-i Jahāngīrī*, Nawal Kishor, Lucknow, 1870, II, p.441. Nūru'l Haqq's work has precedence in point of time over Mu'tamad Khān's, in which (II, p.479) the current date is given as Shahrivar 15 R.Y. of Jahāngīr (August-September 1620).

## 12

## Painting under Akbar as Narrative Art

SOM PRAKASH VERMA

Painting under Akbar, being largely connected with the art of book-illustration, may be described essentially as narrative art. As such its roots are traceable in both Persian and Indian art (sculpture as well as painting).

The Mughal school, which with its distinct style emerged by 1580, shows the imprint of the Safavid and Timurid art traditions and some influence of the classical Indian schools (the Ajanta and Western Indian Schools), especially in the case of manuscript painting: the best earliest testimony to this is provided by the illustrations of the *Tūfīnāma* MS in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (c.1565-70), the *Anwār-i Suhailī* MS in the School of Oriental and African Studies, London (1570), and the *Hamzanāma* (c.1565-80) fragments. A careful study shows that the various modes of visual narration found here continued later in the Mughal school, though with greater complexity. The Mughal pictorial tradition comes out in a variety of ways in the art of book-illustration.

The simplest of the modes of the artist's expression, in the Mughal narratives, is represented by the illustrations of the *Tūfīnāma*. Here we find the selection of the key scene from the episode and a brief representation of it in one plane. Such scenes are pictured so as to enable the viewer to identify the episode. In this MS, while a single scene is intended for one episode, it helps the viewer little to narrate the story to himself, since earlier and later courses of the event do not form part of the artist's narration. Thus, representation of a single scene remains isolated, and there is no depiction of continuity of the event. Consequently, such visual narratives lack the concept of space and time. In them, only the key figures of an event appear in the scene, and the whole action revolves around them.

The *Tūṭīnāma* illustrations are thus characterized by 'single-scene' representation, e.g. an episode of the 'Thirty-first Night' (MS. folio 207r) is represented by how 'The donkey wearing the skin of a tiger, reveals his identity by braying'. The event is thus described:<sup>1</sup>

...He had a donkey but no money to buy hay for him. Because of the lack of fodder for the donkey, the merchant was losing business; and the donkey for the lack of oats headed for the storehouse of Judgement Day.

The merchant was a wise man of good deeds. He secured a lion's skin, and every night he put the skin on the donkey and let him wander in the nearby fields and gardens. He instructed him: 'If a watchman appears, bend your left knee and stand still in front of him. Move as much as your coat will allow, but keep him from discovering your real identity. Do not bray so that your disguise is not discovered and thereby your true nature can remain hidden'.

The donkey acted accordingly and fooled everyone.

In a few days the donkey recovered and in a short time gained some weight. Since the neighbours thought he was a lion, they abandoned their fields and gardens.

*One night the donkey appeared in a certain field. The guards, scared of his claws, climbed up a tree. Just then a donkey nearby brayed. The merchant's donkey, as a donkey would, began to bray also by drawing his breath in and out, making a raucous noise which revealed what he was.*

From this harsh sound, the guards discovered what he was and knew what he was not. They descended from the trees, tied the donkey to the tree, gave him a good beating and punished him for the scare and terror (he had spread). The animal's own voice had revealed his identity and was the cause of his disgrace.

The illustrative miniature, while it shows a donkey braying clad in tiger's skin [lion's skin in the text] amidst a field, and the guards hiding in the foliage of trees, alarmed at the animal's raucous noise, illustrates only the part of the story italicised in the above passage (Plate 1).

The naive 'single-scene' representations is described by Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray as a result of their derivation from the Indian tradition.<sup>2</sup> This characteristic of the *Tūṭīnāma*

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad A. Simsar, ed. and tr., *The Cleveland Museum of Arts: Tūṭīnāma, Tales of Parrot by Zaiyuddīn Nakkhshabī*, Austria, 1978, pp. 198-9, colour pl. facing page 200.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray, *Painting of India*, Cleveland, 1963, pp. 82-3, colour pl. on p. 85.

narratives tended gradually to disappear in the Mughal school since the art of visual narration led from simple to complex. In 'single-scene' representations the narrative movements of the text are almost discarded and, thus, there are always limited possibilities of pictorial action. In such examples, the dramatic aspect of the illustration is the only force which stimulates the viewer to relate it to the story. Even in some cases like the illustrations on folios 37v, 43r, 51v, 102v, 223v, 282v and 316r, the illustrations neither unfold a story, nor even depict a part of it.<sup>3</sup> Their purpose appears didactic and purely decorative. Of course, in these cases, visual recounting of a scene does not appear to have been aimed at by the artist (Plate II).

The compositions representing continuous narration of an event are sometimes seen in the *Anwār-i Suhailī*, which is contemporaneous with the *Tūṭīnāma*. Otherwise, in general, this manuscript also contains 'one-scene' representations. In it, within one picture plane more than one phase of an event or story is represented. Of course, the phases selected for representation form normally the end/climax of the story. But the artist does not demarcate the two phases and depicts them in a single visual field. The only indication for identifying these courses is the repetition of the main figure in different spaces plotted by the artist in the composition. These phases of an event relate the successive movements of the story, and are suggestive of both space and time in painting. The miniature on folio 232r in the *Anwār-i Suhailī* illustrates the story of an old farmer's unfaithful young wife who eloped with a prince. On their way, while they rested by a spring, a lion suddenly attacked the woman and the prince galloped away in terror. In the illustration, the figures of the main characters, the prince and woman, are repeated twice.<sup>4</sup> In the composition, in the right hand corner (below), the prince and the woman are shown seated by a spring; and the left hand corner depicts the woman being mauled by the lion and the prince galloping away (Plate III). Thus, these two successive stages of an event are presented

<sup>3</sup> For their reproductions, see Pramod Chandra and Daniel J. Ehnborn, *The Cleveland Tūṭīnāma Manuscript and the Origins of Mughal Painting*, Chicago, 1976, pls. 12, 21-5.

<sup>4</sup> See John Seyller, 'The School of Oriental and African Studies *Anwār-i Suhailī*: the illustration of a de luxe Mughal Manuscript', *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 38, New York, 1985, p. 124, fig. 12.

in a single visual field so as to suggest the continuity of the event taking place at different times. The repetition of figures of the main characters in Mughal narrative painting is, however, rather rare: it is also unknown in Persian book-illustration. In Indian art its earliest evidence is found in the Gandhara and Mathura sculpture (Plates IV-V).<sup>5</sup> An example of this narrative method is seen at the Stupas of Sanchi (second half of the first century B.C.) and in Ajanta paintings (Plate VI).<sup>6</sup>

Continuous narration in the Mughal school appears in the *Hamzanāma* illustrations, which show multiple phases of an event depicted within a single visual field. These phases (units of an event) revolve around the central theme and make the representation of the event more elaborate and descriptive. In such instances, the main figures are not repeated. Rather, the picture plane is divided into small units which contain action related to the main theme. In the division of the visual field, use is freely made of the receptacles comprising hillocks, mounds of earth, stream, vegetation, architectural columns, etc. — a technique well known to the Ajanta painter,<sup>7</sup> but equally in vogue in Persian MS painting (Plate VII).

In general, in 15th-16th century Persian narrative art, the trend of breaking up a visual field into two or more units was in vogue, but these units remained isolated in the absence of the artist's effort to show some kind of relationship between them. As a result, cohesive effect in the narration suffered. Mughal artists rectified this shortcoming and succeeded in connecting the units through

<sup>5</sup> Madeleine Hallade, *The Gandhara Style and the Evolution of Buddhist Art*, London, 1968, p. 133, pl. 97. The Gandhara bas-relief (British Museum, London) depicts two episodes from the scene 'Conversion of Nanda' (c. 200 A.D.). In the centre, Nanda is about to carry a bowl of food to the Buddha; on the left, Nanda offers the bowl to the Buddha. Thus, the panel shows the main figure being repeated to fulfil the demand of continuous narration. See also *ibid.*, p. 100, pl. 72.

The bas-relief from Mathura (Sarnath School, Gupta style, 5th-century) lodged in National Museum, New Delhi, shows 'The Departure of Bodhisattva, Bodhisattva shaves his head; his ritual immersion in the river Nairanjana, food being offered to him by Sujāta; and the Buddha in meditation' in one visual field with no demarcation between these phases of the life of the Buddha (*ibid.*, pp. 201-2, pl. 162).

<sup>6</sup> Vidya Dehejia, 'Narrative Modes in Ajanta Cave 17: A Preliminary Study', *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, London, 1991, pp. 48-9, Fig. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Lubor Hajek, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal School*, Prague, 1960, p. 31. 'In the Ajanta Paintings the group of figures are held together by the receptacles; and the contact between the figures was emphasized by the overcrowding of these restricted spaces.'

rhythmic movements, gestures and facial expressions. In their work, there appeared something free, bold and more vigorous in effect than the Persian painters had ever expressed.<sup>8</sup> The rhythmic movement not only established a relationship between the figures but also promoted naturalism. Barrett and Gray have defined this relationship between the figures as 'psychological', in contrast to the almost entirely formal relationship seen in Iranian painting.<sup>9</sup> In the narratives of the *Tuḥfāt-nāma* also there is an emphasis on establishing a psychological relationship between the figures. Pramod Chandra and Daniel J. Ehnborn hold that the vitality, inner coherence and unity seen in the *Hamzanāma* illustrations are obviously the result of indigenous elements at work in the formation of the Mughal style.<sup>10</sup>

Such compositions emerged in their most mature form in the illustrations of the *Tārīkh-i Khāndān-i Timūriya*, c. 1584-7 (Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna), the *Jamī'-ut Tawārīkh*, dated 1597-8 (Imperial Library, Teheran) and the *Akbarnāma*, c. 1602-5 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) where we find the visual field in a single illustration accommodating three to five units containing successive details of an event. An outstanding example of such an arrangement is an illustration of 'Daughters of Sulṭān Muḥammad being married' in the *Tārīkh-i Khāndān-i Timūriya*.<sup>11</sup> In it, the visual field accommodates four units. The upper half, divided diagonally, represents the emperor and the nobles (the latter wishing him on the occasion) and the princess being attended upon by their maids. The lower half accommodates musical parties in two separate groups. First of all, there comes the group of female musicians and dancers; and thereafter, outside the palace, the musicians of the *naqqārkhāna* are shown giving performances, while the attendants stand with gifts, etc., in their hands (Plate VIII). Here the units are separated by architectural features (mainly walls) and are set in a series of ascending diagonals in a zigzag order.

In another instance, 'Rejoicing at the birth of Akbar's second

<sup>8</sup> Karl Khandalavala, 'The Mughal School and its Ramifications', in *The Development of Style in Indian Painting*, Delhi, 1974, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Barrett and Gray, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Pramod Chandra and D.J. Ehnborn, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Som Prakash Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 18, pl. XIV.

son at Fatehpur-Sikri', the visual field comprises five units: the unit on the top right shows the queen with her new-born baby attended by maids; the unit adjoining it on the extreme top right shows female attendants engaged in some work; the units just below the above two units depict female musicians and dancers, while a group of astrologers are busy preparing the horoscope. And, lastly, the unit at the bottom contains the depiction of the musicians of the *naqqārkhāna* with the accompaniment of the male dancers outside the palace (Plate IX).<sup>12</sup>

The above narrative modes remained in practice at Akbar's atelier simultaneously, with the exception of the second category of the narration where the main figure is repeated. This statement is equally true in the case of narrative paintings of Jahāngir's and Shah Jahan's reigns as well.

Mughal painters lacked the technical ability to represent three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional plane. Therefore, in compositions intended to represent continuous narration, they often composed various phases of an event in a vertical format, that is, in an ascending order. In such narratives, units of an episode are represented one upon the other without firm demarcation between them, though the receptacles placed in the visual field help the viewer to distinguish them.

In the vertical order, objects are shown simultaneously at eye-levels (direct-view) and from above (bird's eye-view). Hajek observes that this narrative mode seen at Ajanta was improved by Buddhist artists by making use of hierarchical perspective in addition to the direct view and bird's eye-view.<sup>13</sup> Kramrisch has called this complexity of views 'multiple perspective'.<sup>14</sup> Vidya Dehejia notes continuous narrative in a vertical format from Cave 17 at Ajanta: 'Buddha's descent from the heavens'.<sup>15</sup> This narrative mode shows a definite shift away from the strict Persian convention, the earliest examples of which shift in Akbar's atelier appear in the *Hamzanāma* miniatures containing typical treatment of the picture-space with an arrangement of plane behind plane, i.e.,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-8, pl. XIII.

<sup>13</sup> Hajek, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Vidya Dehejia, p. 49: 'Continuous narrative in a vertical format is effectively utilized to portray the Buddha's descent from the heavens at Sankissa. At the top-most level, the Buddha preaches in the heavens to his mother and to the gods; the middle portion refers to the descent; while the lowest level depicts him on earth, preaching to monks and lay worshippers.'

subsidiary scenes set in the background — an expression fundamentally Indian, and not Persian.<sup>16</sup> In this context, Ettinghausen's observations on 'Abdu-ṣ Ṣamad's miniature, 'Akbar presenting a miniature to his father Humayun' (datable before 1559), is important: 'the hustle and bustle of the subject, the realistic approach of the painter, and the way of showing the attendants and servants outside the wall with the main scene behind, that is higher up in the painting, betray an Indian style.'<sup>17</sup>

It was the ingenuity of the Mughal painters that in the continuous narratives they made the fullest use of receptacles to create rhythm. A zigzag placement of small units in a single visual field, suggesting movement, also enhanced depth in the picture. Similarly, the diagonal setting of objects (main characters) well suited action-filled narratives.

Walter M. Spink and Deborah Levine observe that the visual narratives mainly marked by violent physical action and excitement seen in the *Akbarnāma* show that artists considered that a diagonal emphasis was more vital than a vertical or horizontal one. Their remarks on the narratives 'Retainers watching elephant chase across the bridge of boats' and 'Bullocks dragging siege-gun during attack on Ranthambhor' are worth quoting.<sup>18</sup>

The diagonal pull of the thundering elephants seems about to topple the composition, as it threatens to upset the flimsy pontoon bridge. The fleeing Ran Bagh even crosses the picture frame to give further tension to the whole. We find this bold diagonal axis repeated in other illustrations from the *Akbarnāma*. It appears to have been a favourite compositional device.

In this scene, one of the two illustrations on facing pages from the Victoria and Albert manuscript, the adjoining ascent is dramatically depicted. The artist Miskin has employed two bold diagonal axes, one jutting off at a sharp angle from the other, which conveys brilliantly the sense of a precipitous and rocky terrain, and the strain on men and bullocks as they force their way foot by foot up the almost vertical path. ... This painting is certainly one of the most powerfully conceived and executed in the entire *Akbarnāma* manuscript.

<sup>16</sup> Basil Gray, in Leigh Ashton, ed., *The Art of India and Pakistan*, London, 1940, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Ettinghausen, 'Abd-us-Ṣamad', *Encyclopedia of World Art*, New York, Vol. I, p. 19, pl. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Walter M. Spink and Deborah Levine, *Akbarnāma: Catalogue*, New York, no date, pls. and text, Nos. 3-4 and 15-16.

In other instances from the same manuscript, a series of ascending diagonals can be seen in the 'Building of the Fort at Agra' and 'Trained elephants executing Khan Zamān's followers'.<sup>19</sup>

The figures shown, though in a very casual manner, extending beyond the picture frame — a marked characteristic of the Safavid and Timurid miniatures — appear complementary to the mode of continuous narration. Similarly, the objects shown only in part on the extreme outer margin of the visual field, some portion of them being cut out of vision, are also suggestive of continuity of the scene beyond the picture frame. The artists have used the picture frame to cut the scene, implying that the viewer is confronted with only part of the whole. This mode undoubtedly imparted breadth to the visual field.

Though at present it is not our purpose to evaluate the historicity of the Mughal narratives, a brief discussion of it is necessary since it relates to the selection of certain passages of an event and the choice of descriptive details.

In spite of the limitations of the narrative styles, there was always a great variety in the artist's mode of expression even in the depiction of narratives on similar themes. The artist seems to have enjoyed considerable freedom in the selection of descriptive details related to the main event. A comparison of four miniatures from the various copies of the *Baburnāma* in the British Museum, London; National Museum, New Delhi; Museum of Oriental Cultures, Moscow; and Fogg Art Museum, Boston, representing one and the same event ('Bird-trapping') would confirm that the pictures differed in details of the objects.<sup>20</sup> One finds that the British Museum miniature is more elaborate when it represents bird-trappers in action with a variety of devices used in trapping. As against this, the illustrations from the National Museum (Delhi) and Moscow collections are comparatively simple in detail as well as in composition. Thus the number of the objects introduced in a visual field and other details comprising the background always varied in narratives of identical themes. Nevertheless, an identity of the miniature with the related text always remained. Further, in the selection of the passage of an event, too, the artist had a choice.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pls. and text, Nos. 7-8 and 21. Also see No. 22.

<sup>20</sup> For their reproductions see, Hamid Suleiman, *Miniatures of Baburnāma*, Tashkent, 1970, colour pl. 27; S.I. Tyulayev, *Miniatures of Babur Nāmah*, Moscow.

It becomes clear after a comparison of the miniatures illustrating one and the same event and the appreciation of their content in the light of the literal demands of the text. One such example is 'Akbar on his way to Pak Patan hunting wild asses' illustrated in the *Tārīkh-i Khāndān-i Timūriya* (c. 1584-7) and *Akbarnāma* (c. 1602-05).<sup>21</sup> This particular event is thus described by Abū'l Fazl:

On the way a strange thing occurred on the borders of Rāi 'Alā'ud-dīn's Talwandi near the Sutlej, which is there called the Harhari. The brief account of this is that the scouts reported that there was a herd of wild asses (gorkhar). The sovereign proceeded to hunt them, attended by three or four special huntsmen. When he came near the plain he dismounted and proceeded on foot. At the first shot he hit an ass, and the rest of the herd fled far away at the report of the gun. That Divine world-hero took his piece in his hand and proceeded rapidly on foot over the burning sand, attended by the same three or four huntsmen. He soon traversed the plain and came up with the herd and killed one after the other with his gun. He continued to follow them up, and on that day he shot thirteen wild asses. Whenever he killed one the others went further off than at first. At this time he became consumed by thirst. There was no sign of water. As he had decided to follow the prey on foot, those attached to the hunt thought that H.M. was near at hand, and so kept in view the place where the game was and did not leave their place. When the lord of the world had traversed some *kos*, his attendants, though they searched, could get no news of the water-carriers, nor any trace of water. A strange condition supervened, and the weakness from thirst increased to such a degree that he lost the power of speech.

The miniature in the former MS, showing Akbar on foot engaged in hunting wild-asses with his matchlock, is a visual narration of the first part of the event (Plate X). The second and concluding phase of the event is the choice of the *Akbarnāma* artists Mahesh and Kesav. They represent Akbar seated and exhausted after the hunt, his matchlock resting on his shoulder and the attendants enquiring about the strange condition of the emperor (Plate XI).

1960, pl. 15; M.S. Randhawa, *Paintings of the Baburnāma*, New Delhi, 1984, colour pl. VIII; S.C. Welch, *Art of Mughal India: Painting and Precious Objects*, New York, 1963, pl. 9. See also Som Prakash Verma, 'Treatment of similar themes: a study based on the illustrations of *Tuzuk-i Babur*', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Chandigarh, 1973, pp. 293-4.

<sup>21</sup> The miniature on folio 331a in *Tārīkh MS* is not published. For the reproduction of the *Akbarnāma* miniature see Geeti Sen, *Paintings from the Akbarnāma*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 137, colour pl. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Abū'l Fazl, *Akbarnāma*, ed. text, Vol. II, 359-60; tr., Vol. II, p. 522.

Thus, while the event remains the same, the choice varied in the selection of the part of an episode to be presented in the visual field. Of course, the selection was always related to the crucial part of the episode which enabled the viewer to relate to the story.

Often, to lay emphasis on a particular event, the visual-field is enlarged by making the composition into a 'double-page' illustration. The theme 'Battle between the rival groups of *sanyāsīs* at Thanesar' forms a one-page illustration in the *Tārīkh-i Khāndān-i Timūriya* (c. 1584-7) and represents the main characters in the middle of the visual field, and the battle-scene on the right hand corner (Plate XII).<sup>23</sup> A double-page illustration of the same event, executed during 1602-5 in the *Akbarnāma* (V&A), is clearly much richer in descriptive details.<sup>24</sup> The location of the battle in both the visual narratives is identical, that is, the huge banyan tree is depicted in both of them in the middle of the masonry platform by the side of a large tank, besides which the whole action is shown as taking place (Plates XIII-XIV). The *Akbarnāma* illustration contains more details in conformity with the text of the event as described by Abū 'l Fazl.<sup>25</sup>

While he was encamped at Thanesar, a dispute arose among the *Sanyāsīs* which ended in bloodshed ...

The leader Kisū Pūrī came to Ambala and did homage, and made a claim for justice... After that the Pūrīs attacked the Kūrs with stones... They came up with their Pīr and head, who was called Ānand Kūr, and slew the miserable creature.

The *Akbarnāma* illustration shows Akbar's men joining one group (*Pūrīs*) of the *sanyāsīs* in their attack on the rival group (*Kūrs*), and Ānand Kūr, the chief of the latter group, being slain. Thus, one finds that the above two historical illustrations though executed in a different space and time, adhered to the text in its essence. This characteristic of visual narrations also confirms their historical nature.

Double-page illustrations appear first in 1584-7 in the MS *Razmnāma* of the Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur.<sup>26</sup> In general,

<sup>23</sup> The miniature on folio 322a in *Tārīkh* MS is not published.

<sup>24</sup> For reproduction, Sen, pp. 105-9, colour pls. 43-4.

<sup>25</sup> *Akbarnāma*, ed. text, Vol. II, pp. 286-7, tr., Vol. II, pp. 422-4.

<sup>26</sup> See T. H. Hendley, *Razmnāmah (Memorial of Jeypore Exhibition-1883)*, IV, Jaipur, pls. xlvii-xlviii, lxi-lxii, lxxv-lxxvii, cxxvi-cxxviii, cxxxix-cxli.

the compositions running on two pages were preferred for narratives dealing with feasts and festivities and battle and hunting scenes.

In some cases, the emphasis given to a certain event is explained by treating various phases of the event as the subject of separate visual fields.<sup>27</sup> But, in such instances, the quality and spirit of the continuous narration is lost.

The visual narrative styles and methods discussed above were not innovations of the Mughals, since these were in practice earlier, both in sculpture and painting in India and Persia. Their ingenuity lies in treating the visual field, even when it comprised multiple views, so as to offer an integrated and compact picture of an event filled with action. The elaborate visual field containing more than two or three units of an episode, held within receptacles, yet remains unified so as to unfold the story and its various phases coherently.

The Mughal visual narratives are manifestly at variance with their counterparts in pre-Mughal Indian art; and there is a clear departure from the traditional didactic function of the illustrations, as seen in the the illustrated MSS of the Western Indian School (and also in early Mughal MS *Tūfānāma*), where incorporation of the illustrations seems decorative and simply serves as a vehicle for increasing the appeal of the text. At the Mughal atelier, representation of actual narrative details became the mainstay of an artist's work. He always seems particular about the accuracy and truthful depiction of the objects related to the descriptive details in the portrayal of a scene or event. As such, his visual narratives are well recognized for the faithful depiction of material culture and natural history. While looking at them today, one finds oneself transported into the past. Of course, in the case of past events the artist had no opportunity to formulate a direct visual contact with the textual details, as it was possible for him in the portrayal of contemporary episodes and events from day-to-day life. In such narratives, the descriptive details in the visual field are expanded by the artist by drawing upon his experience through imagination, too, played a part. Further, his pictorial narratives are imbued with naturalism — a characteristic which enlivens

<sup>27</sup> T. W. Arnold and J. V. S. Wilkinson, *Library of Chester Beatty, A Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures*, Vol. II, London, 1936, plates 39a-b, 43a-b, 44a-b.



the scene. By placing the main characters of an event in their appropriate surroundings, the Mughal artist creates drama in the visual field to meet the literal illustrative demand of the text. Barrett and Gray detect realism in Mughal narrative art at an early date, 1570, when they observe it especially in the representation of figure drawings and architecture, with the application of shading and modelling.<sup>28</sup> Eletr says that with the emergence of Indian ideals in the Mughal School, the Persian traditions and methods weakened.<sup>29</sup> However, the Mughal artist's originality was in shaping naturalism to explore objective characteristics of the material world. His deep interest in the subject matter left little scope for spiritual and emotional aspects in his narratives — an element in conflict with Indian tradition. The reality as understood from the Mughal painter's work is well described by Hajek: 'It is non-symbolic; it does not imply any reality that it does not portray.'<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Barrett and Gray, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> M.R. Eletr, 'Birds and Animals in Mughal Painting', *Bulletin of the College of Arts*, Vol. I, Baghdad, 1959, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Hajek, p. 23.



Plate I. Donkey wearing a tiger-skin reveals its identity by braying. *Tūfīnāma*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, f.207.

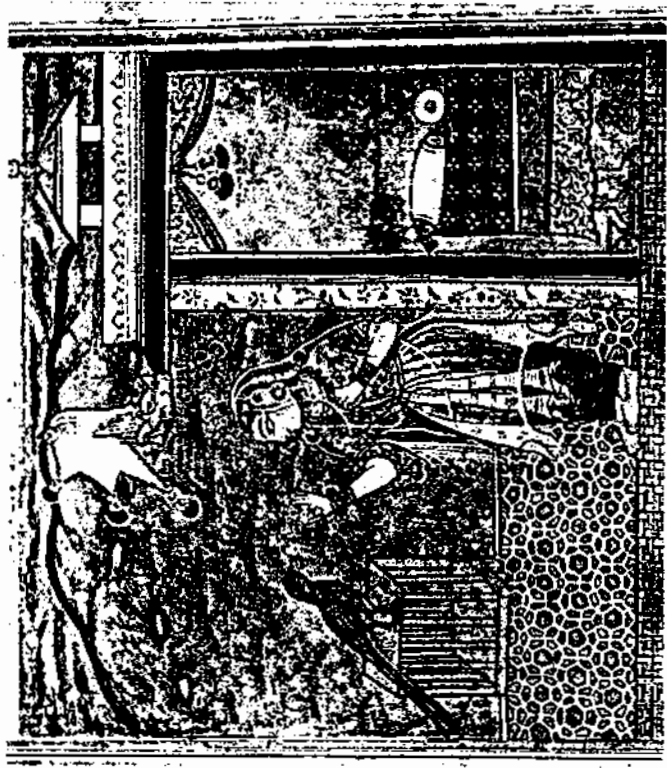


Plate II. Parrot addresses Khujasta. *Tūfīnāma*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, f.282.

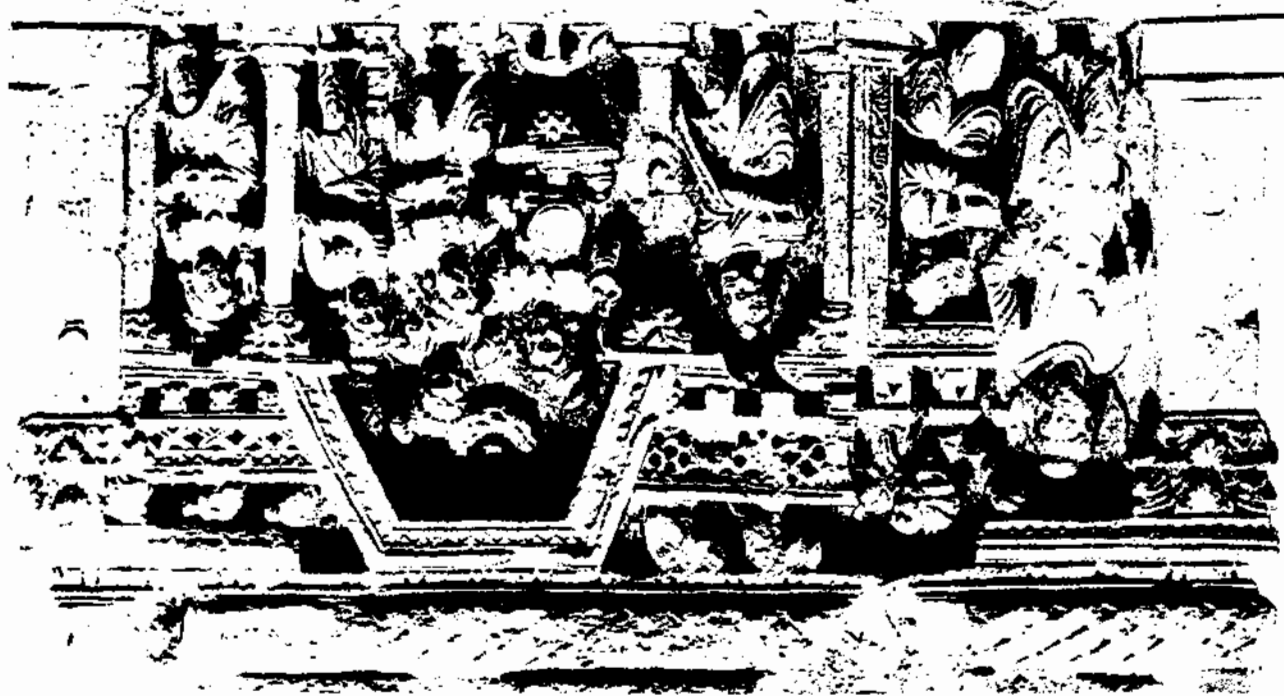


Plate III. Conversion of Nanda (c. 500 A.D.), Gandhara School.

British Museum, London



Plate IV. Old farmer's unfaithful wife, and her end. *Anwār-i-Suhailī*, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, f.232.





Plate V. Departure of the Bodhisattva (c. 500 A.D.), Mathura (Sarnath School). National Museum, New Delhi.

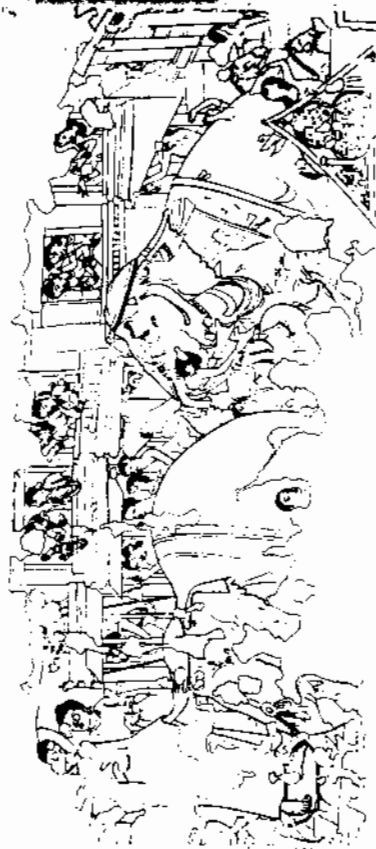


Plate VI. Story of the elephant Nalagati (c. 500 A.D.), Ajanta Cave XVII.

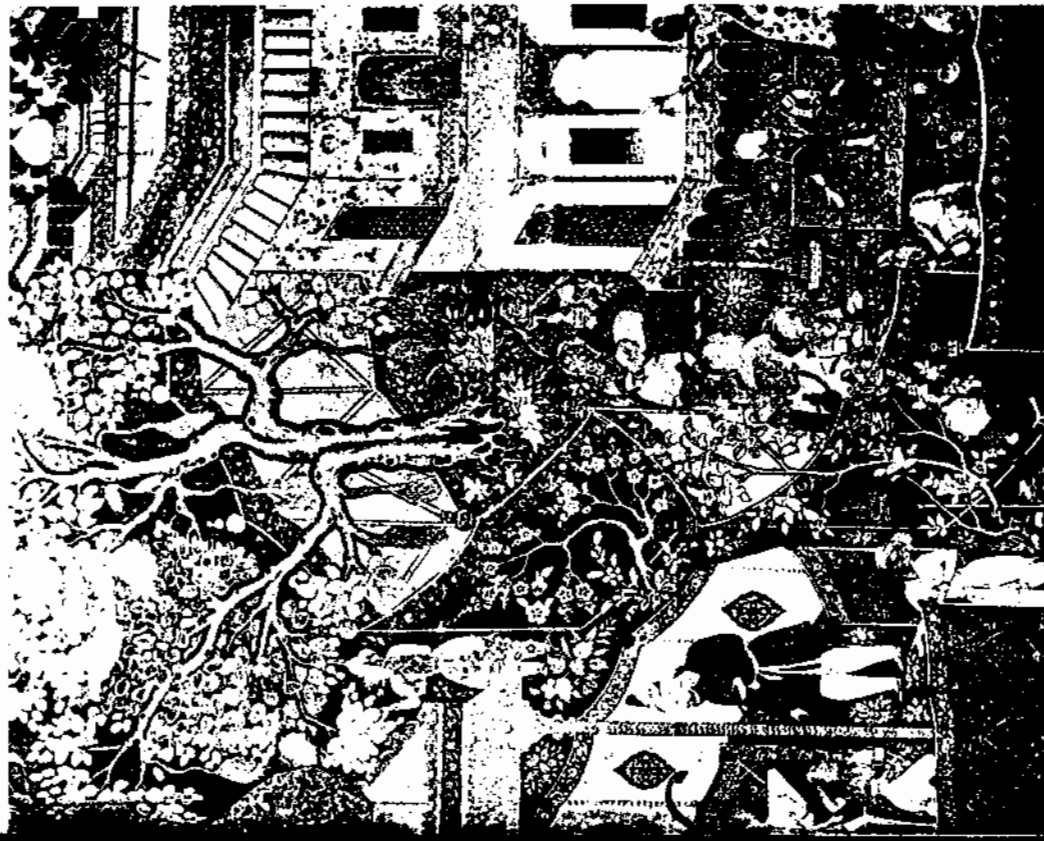


Plate VII. Folio from a copy of the *Hamzanama*. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

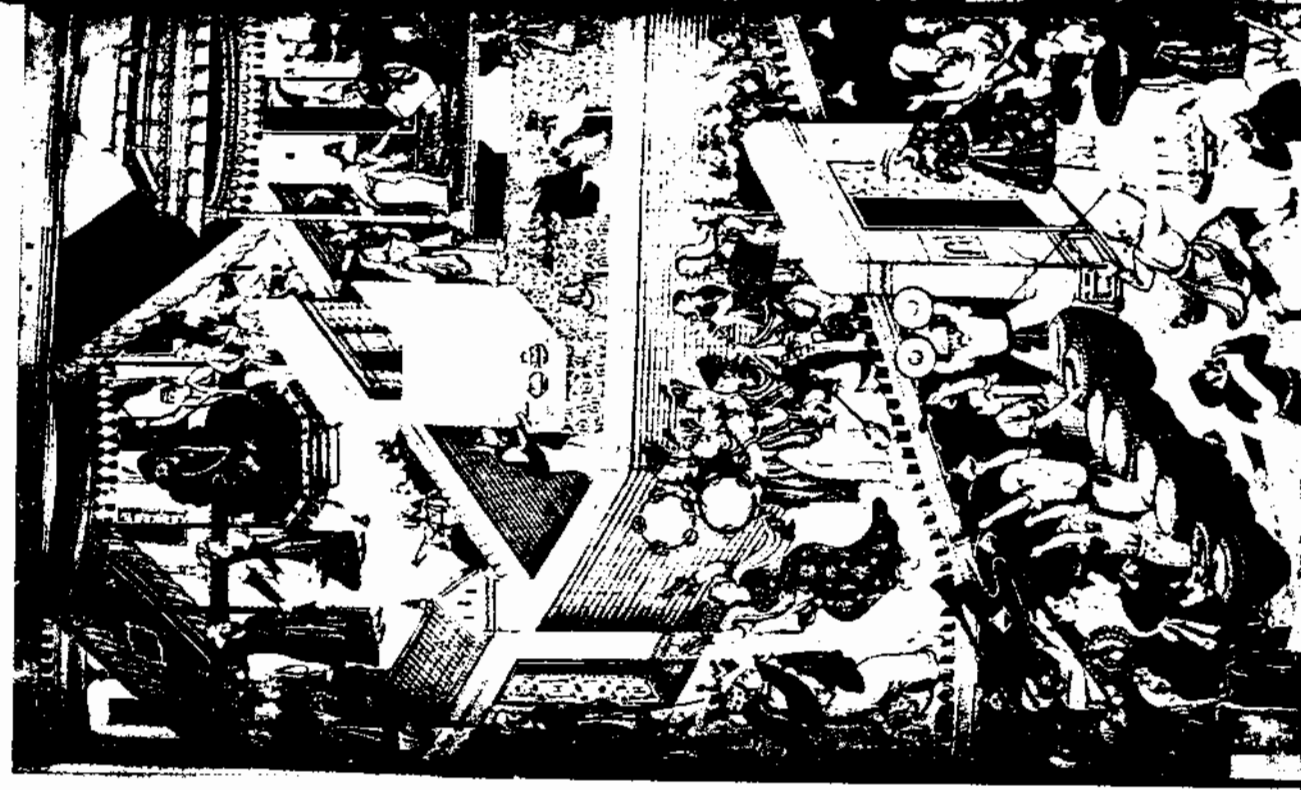


Plate VIII. Daughters of Sultan Muhammad being married. *Tārīkh-i Khāndān-i Timūriya*, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, f.40.

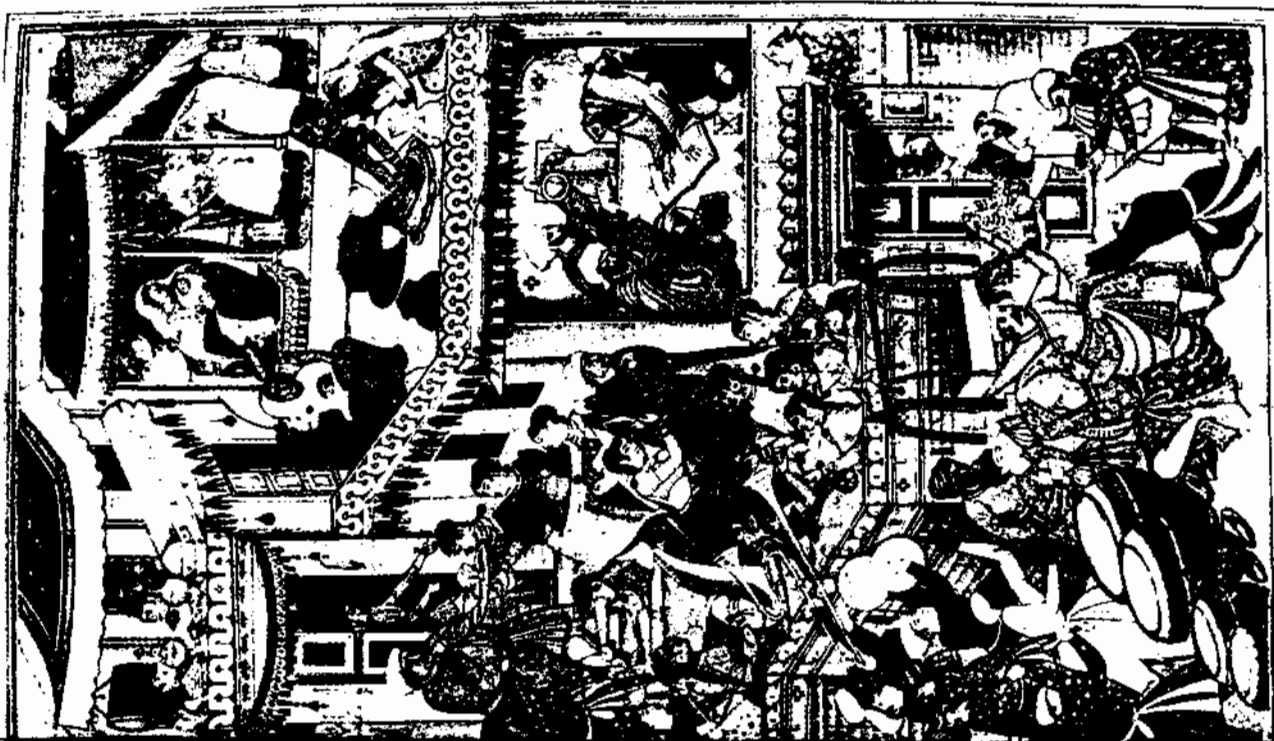


Plate IX. Rejoicing at the birth of Akbar's second son. *Akbar-nāma*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No.80/117.



Plate X. Akbar hunts wild asses. *Tārīkh-i Khāndān-i Timūriya*, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, f.331.



Plate XI. Akbar lost after hunting. *Akbarnāma*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No.84/117.



Plate XII. Akbar present at armed combat of ascetics. *Tārīkh-i Khandān-i Timūriya*, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, f.322.



Plate XIII. Akbar present at armed combat of ascetics. *Akbari*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No.61/117 (first of double-page illustration).

## Revisiting Fatehpur Sikri An Interpretation of Certain Buildings

S. ALI NADEEM REZAVI

Since the monumental work of E. W. Smith in four volumes, has been written about Fatehpur Sikri, the imperial city of A Apart from a large number of papers and articles published in various journals, a number of books have also appeared.<sup>1</sup> A perplexing problem has been the nomenclature of buildings, various authors using different names for the same buildings, again there is the problem of the popular attributions circumscribed sometime in the previous century and accepted by archaeologists and historians. A recent work broadly divided the monument into two categories: those that have been mentioned in the Persian sources and those that have not.<sup>2</sup> Another controversy regards this city is of a more recent origin: Is Fatehpur a planned city like the later Shahjahanabad laid out by Akbar's grandson, or did it evolve gradually. A. Petruccioli tries to persuade us to the former view,<sup>3</sup> although a reading of the sources leads to a contrary conclusion. Much may be learnt in time by careful archaeological excavation. In the 1970s a joint team of archaeologists of the Archaeological

<sup>1</sup> Eg. S. K. Banerji, 'Buland Darwāza of Fatehpur Sikri', *London Historical Quarterly*, XIII, 1937; idem, 'A Historical Outline of Akbar's Darul Khilafat Fatehpur Sikri', *Journal of Indian History*, XXI, 1942; Fr. Heras, 'The Palaces at Fatehpur Sikri', *JMI*, 1925; Ashraf Husain, *A Guide to Fatehpur Sikri*, 1947; A. B. M. Husain, *Fatehpur Sikri and its Architecture*, Dacca, Muhammad Sayeed Marahavi, *Tarikh-i Fatehpur* (Urdu), 1905; S. A. A. *Fatehpur Sikri*, New Delhi, 1972; S. A. A. Rizvi & V. L. A. Flynn, *Fatehpur Sikri*, Bombay, 1975; Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry (ed.), *Fatehpur Sikri: A Book*, Massachusetts, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry (ed.), op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Attilio Petruccioli, *La Città Del Sole & Delle Acque Fatehpur Sikri*, 1988.



Plate XIV. Second part (No. 62/117) of the illustration on Plate XIII.