From the exuberant carvings of Hindu temples to the elegant symmetry of the Taj Mahal, from the luminous wall-paintings of Ajanta to the vibrant images of illustrated manuscripts, the Indian subcontinent offers an amazing visual feast. In this comprehensive survey Vidya Dehejia, a leading authority on Indian art, explains and analyses not only such key early developments as the great cities of the Indus civilization, the serene Buddha image, the intriguing art of cave sites and sophisticated temple-building traditions, but also the luxury of the Mughal court, the palaces and pavilions of Rajasthan, the churches of Portuguese Goa, art in the British Raj, and issues taking art into the twenty-first century.

Using a contextual approach, the book considers the meaning of the word 'art' in the Indian cultural milieu, the relationship between art and the subcontinent's religious traditions, the status of artists and the impact of trade and travel on artistic development. The only full and up-to-date history of the subcontinent's artistic heritage, this is an essential introduction for the student, traveller and general reader.

Vidya Dehejia is Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian Art at Columbia University in New York. She was previously Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Her books include *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India* and *Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints*.

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Indian Art Vidya Dehejia

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In the mid-sixteenth century, with Vijayanagara monarch Sadashiva a mere figurehead, Ramaraya, military commander of the Vijayanagara army and effective ruler of the empire, acted arrogantly towards the Deccan sultans. In retaliation, the sultanates unexpectedly joined forces and in January 1565 defeated Ramaraya in battle. Though the battle site was some distance from Vijayanagara, the city was ransacked and reduced to rubble. Temples and gateways were set on fire, sculptures were smashed or removed and precious materials plundered. The city was never again occupied by its kings who fled to the neighbouring region of Andhra. Vijayanagara, once a showpiece of imperial triumph and magnificence, was abandoned to centuries of sporadic pillaging and neglect. Since the 1970s, an international team of archaeologists has been working to restore something of its former glory, and it aims to reconstruct several of its monuments.

Visions of Paradise The Luxury of Mughal Art

13

187
Emperor Shah Jahan with his Prime Minister, c.1650. Watercolour and gold on paper, 44 × 32·9 cm, 17⅜ × 12⅞ in. Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC

Overlooking an expansive ornamental garden, and rising in marbled splendour on the banks of the River Jamuna, is the world-renowned Taj Mahal (203). Built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan ('World Ruler') to entomb the remains of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal ('Chosen One of the Palace') who died in childbirth, it is frequently celebrated as a symbol of perfect conjugal love. Court poet Kalim wrote:

Since heaven's vault has been standing,
an edifice like this
has never risen to compete against the sky.

In the twentieth century, the famed Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore evoked it as 'a teardrop on the cheeks of time'. This Islamic monument has become a national symbol of beauty and excellence for all Indians regardless of religious or sectarian affiliation. It also carries a profound and symbolic significance.

Many would judge the Taj Mahal, with its exuberant use of marble, and its charming and tranquil canals and gardens, to represent the perfection of ideas and forms that coalesced under the Mughal dynasty. The English word 'mogul' is derived from these historic Mughals whose milieu of palaces, gardens, gems and rich manuscripts has become synonymous with affluence and luxury. The Mughals were of Turkish–Mongolian heritage; the founder of the dynasty, Babur, was descended on his father's side from Timur or Tamerlane, and on his mother's from Genghis Khan. But these warriors also cultivated an eye for the beautiful. Babur's son Humayun found time for art even as he fled India upon his temporary ouster from the throne. When an exotic bird flew into his tent, he caught it and ordered his artists to paint it.

Babur (r.1526–30), the erstwhile ruler of a small Central Asian principality, turned his attention to India in 1526; defeating the Lodi sultan, he established himself in Delhi as *padshah* or emperor of India, ruling over a loosely knit kingdom that stretched from Afghanistan to the borders of Bengal. His son Humayun temporarily lost his empire to a rival chief of eastern India, and fled the country taking refuge at the court of Shah Tahmasp of Iran. Aided by Iranian forces, Humayun recaptured his territories, but died soon after from a fall. The few architectural remains of these first two monarchs reveal a combination of Iranian Timurid elements with the local inclination for inlaying red sandstone with marble and coloured stones.

It was the third monarch, Akbar (the 'Great'), who not only stabilized and expanded the empire, but also left his indelible imprint on the architecture and painting of India. The first task facing the 14-year-old monarch was the consolidation of the power of the Mughal empire by securing the cooperation of the warring Rajput kingdoms along its western borders. Realizing that distrust between Hindus and Muslims could be detrimental, Akbar took steps to ensure the continuing success of his empire. He prohibited the enslavement of Hindu prisoners of war, abolished the *jizya* tax levied against non-Muslims and in 1562 married a Hindu princess of Amber (near Jaipur), giving her the name Maryam al-Zamani (Mary of the Age). These actions won him the friendship of several Hindu Rajput kings who showed willingness to serve the imperial cause; military successes followed, with most of northern India coming under Akbar's control. Going a step further, Akbar included several Hindus in his trusted group of nobles and court officials. He also permitted his queen and her entourage to celebrate their Hindu rites, rituals and festivals within the palace grounds.

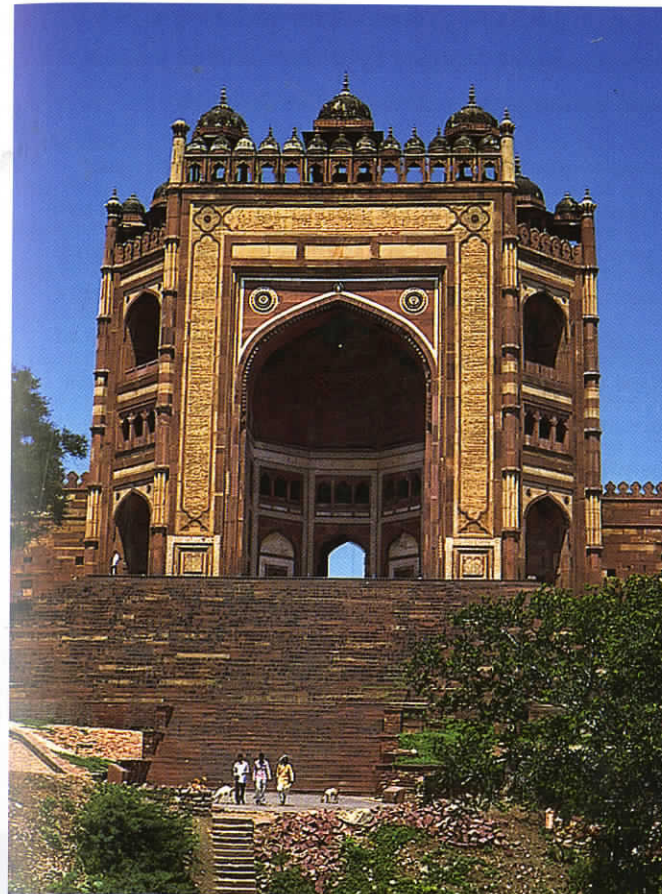
Akbar was a shrewd administrator whose administrative model was later emulated by the British. His empire consisted of twelve, later eighteen, provinces, divided into districts and subdistricts. Each province had two sets of officers, a magistrate in

charge of armed forces and a revenue official; thus one had the armed forces without the cash, while the other had the revenue without the forces. Akbar's imperial service consisted of handsomely paid officers or *mansabdars* in thirty-three grades, from commanders of ten troops to commanders of 5,000. Each provided the emperor with the number of troops indicated by his command, receiving handsome salaries in return. Salaries were later replaced by the revenue from tracts of land; since positions were not hereditary, land reverted to the emperor.

A man of deep intellectual curiosity, Akbar invited to his court Zoroastrians, Jains, Muslims, Hindus and Jesuits from Goa to discuss and exchange religious ideas. He commissioned illustrated versions of the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, after first having the texts translated from the original Sanskrit into Persian, the court language. The earliest extant illustrated *Ramayana* is one produced by him. He eventually proclaimed a new code, an amalgamation of religious conduct that he called *Din-ilahi*, or Divine Faith. His temerity in announcing this new code (not a new religion), knowing full well that it would outrage the orthodox Ulema, may have had its roots in the Mughal belief that emperors radiated from the Light of Allah and were hence special beings touched with divinity. In Abul Fazl's official history of Akbar's reign, the *Akbarnama*, the Mughals refer to themselves as the 'lamp of the house of Timur'. Royalty is also described in the *Ain-i Akbari* or 'Institutes of Akbar' as:

> a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe … Modern language calls this light *farr-i izidi* (the divine light) and the tongue of antiquity called it *kiyan khurra* (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone ….

The concept of divine light being communicated from God is depicted graphically in a painting of emperor Shah Jahan with his prime minister (187), while royal portraits customarily depict the emperors with a halo.



188
Humayun's tomb, Delhi, completed in 1571

189
Buland Darvaza, Fatehpur Sikri, 1573–4

The early years of Akbar's reign were spent in Delhi during which time he built for his father Humayun a magnificent tomb (188), completed in 1571. While tradition assigns a major role in the choice of Iranian architect Mirak Sayyid Ghiyas to Humayun's queen, recent research suggests that Akbar was the main patron. The architect constructed this first grand Mughal garden tomb by placing the red sandstone and marble structure in the middle of a *char-bagh* or four-part garden divided by four water channels. The layout of Mughal garden tombs is embedded in the Islamic visualization of Paradise as a garden through which four streams flow. Today green lawns planted by the British surround the tombs; originally, however, arrayed with flowering plants, indigenous trees and exotic herbs, they must have presented a totally different effect. The mausoleum, built of red sandstone trimmed with white marble, sits on a high plinth. A lofty arched portal dominates the main façade of the large square structure with chamfered sides, and the whole is crowned by an Iranian double dome with an exterior facing of marble. The interior consists of a central octagonal chamber surrounded by eight interconnected chambers. Pierced screens allow light to enter, for light is a symbol of the presence of God. An oft-quoted koranic verse (*sura* 24, lines 35–6) specifies:

God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth …
This Light is found in houses which God allows to be exalted.

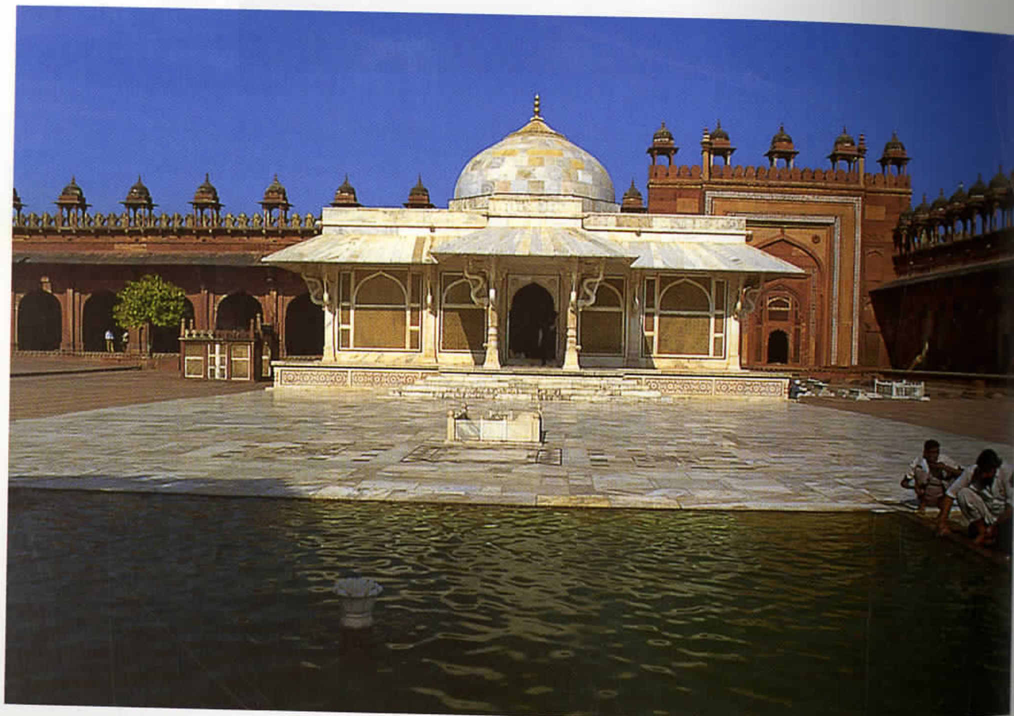
Akbar ordered the rebuilding of the old mud-brick Lodi fort at Agra, but later decided to create a new capital city, some distance from Agra, located spectacularly on a rocky plateau overlooking a lake. The choice of the site was dictated by its being home to shaykh Salim Chishti, a Sufi mystic who had prophesied that Akbar, yet without a living heir, would be blessed with three sons. In 1571, Akbar's Hindu wife gave birth to a son who would become emperor Jahangir; to give honour and thanks, Akbar named his son Salim, and built the town of Fatehpur Sikri (Town of Victory-Sikri), the name perhaps commemorating the inclusion of the Gujarat Sultanate in

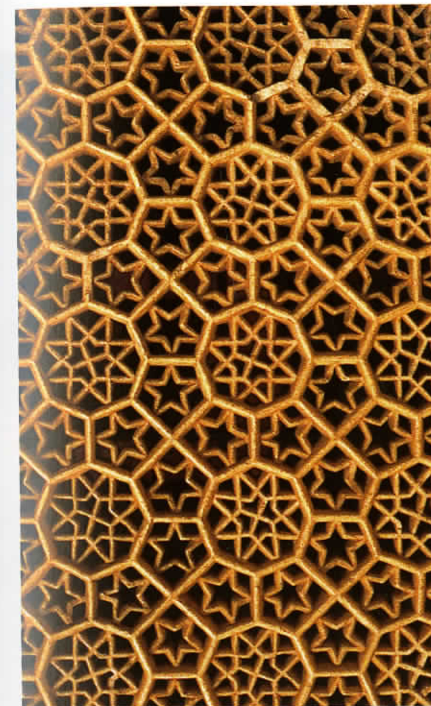
Akbar's empire. The town's monuments, built over fifteen years, were constructed largely by western Indian temple carvers who modified pre-existing Sultanate styles.

Upon the rocky plateau of Fatehpur Sikri stands the royal mosque complex with the palace area to its west and the residential town below. The entrance is through a red sandstone grand gateway, the Buland Darvaza (189), reached by a lofty flight of steps. Its crowning parapet, decorated with a row of kiosks, rises 54 m (177 ft). The large central face of the gateway, dominated by an arched, domed recess, is flanked by two lesser chamfered faces. Framing the arched opening is a wide ornamental border laid with continuous calligraphy of koranic verses. This magnificent entrance leads into a mosque with an arched façade crowned with kiosks, within which are three *mihrabs* to mark the direction of Mecca. On either side of the central archway is a calligraphic chronogram that speaks of the grandeur of the mosque, completed in 1571–2, 'which for its elegance deserves as much reverence as the Kaaba'.

Within the spacious courtyard is an exquisite marble tomb for shaykh Salim Chishti (190, 191). Delicate screens cut into geometric patterns and elegantly inscribed verses from the Koran are artistic evidence of the abstract approach of Islam, while its brackets, in the form of serpentine volutes, speak of the lively repertoire of temple builders. Designs on the marble floor are inlaid with semi-precious stones, and above the tomb rises a remarkable canopy totally covered with thin scales of mother-of-pearl cut into elaborate patterns. The structure seems to have been originally completed in 1580–1 with a veranda and dome of red sandstone. Some of the outer screens may have been the 1606 contribution of Jahangir's foster brother, Khan Koka, while the marble veneer for the dome was added at the behest of the English District Magistrate of Agra in 1866.

The monuments at Fatehpur Sikri carry fanciful nineteenth-century names that have caused confusion regarding the actual usage of buildings. Jodh Bai's palace, for example, supposedly built for the use of Akbar's Rajput wife, is actually a series of





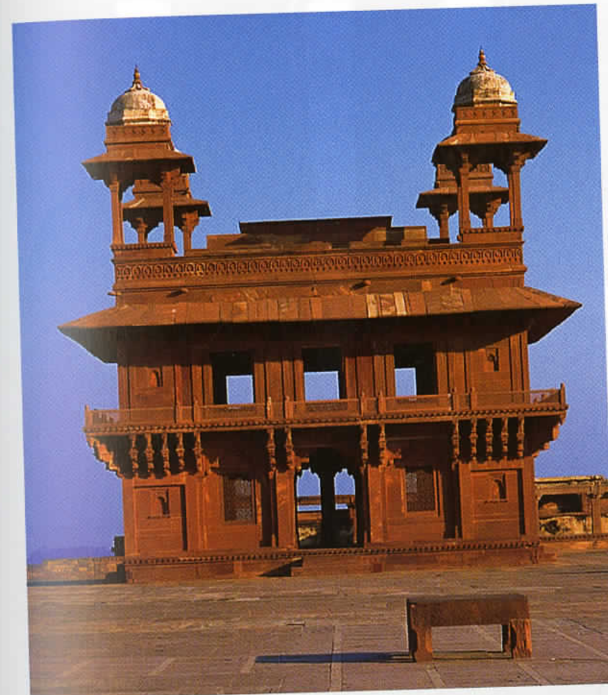
190–191
Tomb of shaykh Salim Chishti, Fatehpur Sikri, mainly c.1571–80
Left
General view of tomb
Right
Detail of screen, c.1606

mansions. Its high, forbiddingly plain exterior wall encloses a series of residential palace structures that face the interior courtyard in the fashion of Gujarat in western India. The decorative treatment of entrances, brackets and relief carvings suggests the craftsmanship of Gujarati woodworkers transferring their art to sandstone. The complex seems to have been the main *haram sara* or harem enclosure that housed the many women of the imperial household, chief among whom was Akbar's mother who held the title of Maryam Makani or Equal to Mary.

Among the more striking monuments in the palace area is the open Panch Mahal (192), or five-storeyed mansion, which seems to have been a *badgir* or wind catcher. Here ladies of the court relaxed in the breeze behind the privacy of delicate latticed screens of which only fragments survive today. The pavilions diminished in size on each succeeding floor, commencing with the lowest containing eighty-four pillars of which no two are alike, and culminating in a single, domed pavilion with just four pillars.

192
Panch Mahal,
Fatehpur Sikri,
c.1571–6

Perhaps the most unusual building is one known as the *Diwan-i-Khas* or Hall of Public Audience (193), although its actual use remains a matter for further research. It gives the outward appearance of being a two-storeyed structure topped by four tall kiosks. Its lofty interior contains a large central pillar topped by one of the most exuberant capitals ever conceived (194); thirty-six closely set brackets, in a circular arrangement in two levels, support a circular stone platform, with bridges connecting it to a gallery that runs around the interior wall. The closest parallels to such brackets, though never in such extravagance, are found in the mosque minarets of the sultans of Gujarat. It was once believed that Akbar, seated upon silken cushions in this central platform, gave audience; the citizenry who came for redress or to submit complaints stood on the ground below, while the nobles sat in the galleries branching out from behind the emperor. Some scholars suggest that Akbar inspected gems and jewels here. All that appears certain is that Akbar sat enthroned on high, proclaiming as it were his position as the *axis mundi*, the central pillar of the Mughal empire.



193
'Hall of Public Audience',
Fatehpur Sikri,
c.1571–6

184
Central pillar of 'Hall of Public Audience', c.1571–6

Fatehpur Sikri was abandoned even during Akbar's reign. The common explanation of a shortage of water might seem possible today since its lake is totally dry; in its time, however, located along the 'royal corridor' between Agra and Ajmer, it was a waterfront city of note. In 1585, Akbar left Sikri to move to Lahore to be closer to troubled frontier areas; his courtiers seem to have been surprised when, in 1598, he chose to go to Agra instead of returning. He does not seem to have made any formal decision to abandon Sikri, and his reason for not returning remains an enigma.

Mughal paintings are among the most treasured works of Indian art, and it was Akbar who cultivated and nurtured the artists who created the Mughal style. The paintings are known as 'miniatures', despite generally being page-sized. By the sixteenth century, prevalent Islamic attitudes towards the representation of living creatures were reconsidered by Indian Muslims. Akbar submitted to theologians this defence of painting (*Ain-i Akbari*, bk I, *ain* 34):

It appears to me as if a painter has quite peculiar means of recognizing God; for a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the Giver of Life, and will thus increase in knowledge.

Akbar's contention was that painting, far from being blasphemous, would actually serve to deepen faith and religious fervour.

The visit of Akbar's father Humayun to the Iranian court was as crucial to art history as to empire. Admiring the paintings of Shah Tahmasp's artists, Humayun persuaded two leading Iranian painters, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd as-Samad, to join him in Delhi. These two senior artists took charge of Akbar's painting workshop and supervised around a hundred local painters. The rapid process that resulted in the emergence of Mughal painting remains unclear. Akbar's painters drew upon existing

indigenous painting traditions of the Hindus, Jains (117) and the sultanates (170), assimilating them with established Iranian styles. Representational techniques from Chinese and European sources were also studied and synthesized. The creation of this new, vibrant style may largely be due to Akbar's encouragement of artistic experimentation, though credit must also go to his artists who effected the transformation.

Painters sat on the ground with one knee flexed to support a drawing board upon which they applied watercolours to paper. From childhood they were taught how to make paint brushes from bird quills set with fine hairs plucked from kittens or baby squirrels. They learned how to grind mineral pigments in a mortar, and to prepare the binding medium of glue. Pigments were also made from earths (red and yellow ochres), and from insect and animal matters (crimson from the lac insect, vivid yellow from the urine of cows fed on mango leaves). To make metallic pigments, gold, silver and copper were pounded in foil, which was then ground in a mortar together with salt. When washed with water, the salt dissolved leaving only pure metal powder. Some artists like Basavan were specially skilled in the application of gold, which they pricked with a stylus to make it glitter. Paintings were burnished by laying them painted side down on a hard, smooth surface and stroking them firmly with polished crystal; burnishing provided a protective hardening comparable with varnishing an oil painting.

Akbar's workshop, like its Iranian counterparts, accumulated a stock of sketches and tracings that could be used to produce new paintings. Tracing was an accepted technique: transparent gazelle skin was placed on a drawing whose contours were transferred to the skin by pricking with a pin. The tracing skin was then placed on fresh paper, and black pigment forced through the pinholes to create an outline. Paintings seem to have taken considerable time to complete; one marginal notation speaks of fifty days worth of work. Once paintings had been burnished they were handed to other specialists who

mounted them on decorative borders and bound them into a book or album.

Although technically illiterate, Akbar had a keen intellect and a phenomenal memory; readers read to him, scribes took dictation. He had an extensive library of 24,000 books, most of them acquired by inheritance, purchase or as gifts from the Iranians. Books that Akbar himself commissioned were written in Persian and invariably illustrated, perhaps to emphasize visual enjoyment. The painting workshop was closely attached to the library, nearly all work being illustrations of manuscripts. Work on a painted page was a collaboration between the master artist, responsible for composition, another to add colour, and frequently a specialist in portraiture. The superintendent of the workshop then wrote the names of all the artists along the margins of the page. From the memoirs of Akbar's reign, it seems the emperor inspected finished work every week, and when pleased, handed out rewards to artists who were normally employed on monthly salaries.

The *Akbarnama*'s section on the art of painting, written by 1598, speaks especially of the work at Akbar's court of the two great Persian masters, two local artists – Dasavanth who died prematurely and Basavan whose specialty was portraiture – and then names another thirteen local artists. Recent scholarship has begun to focus increasingly on the works of individual artists in the emergence of the Mughal style, rather than Akbar's dominating role. Court painters were generally humble craftsmen, but the specially talented earned privileged positions close to the throne; one such was Abul Hasan whom Akbar's son, emperor Jahangir, honoured with the title Nadir al-zaman ('Wonder of the Age').

One of the first projects of Akbar's workshop was a series of large paintings on cloth, the size of modern posters, illustrating the *Hamzanama*, the fabulous adventures of Hamza, an uncle of the prophet Muhammad (195). We know that Akbar enjoyed listening to a recitation of these fantastic stories; the large size

of the paintings and their stout backing suggests that they may have been held up to accompany such recitation. Only some 150 of the original 1,400 paintings of this immense project survive. The images seem to burst from their boundaries, men and women are seen in dramatic action, and even rocks are dynamic. Circular movement is emphasized by figures with outstretched arms and legs. Frequently, scenes are scarcely contained within the boundary of the painting, and foreground figures are often cut off by the lower margin. Using the Indian and Iranian convention of multiple perspective, artists depicted exteriors and interiors of forts and palaces within a single view.

195
Sanghari-i Balki and Lulu the Spy Slit the Throats of the Prison Guards and Free Aiidi Farrukh Nizhad, from the *Tales of Hamza*, 1562–77. Watercolour and gold on cloth; 77 × 62 cm, $30\frac{1}{4} \times 24\frac{1}{2}$ in. Brooklyn Museum, New York

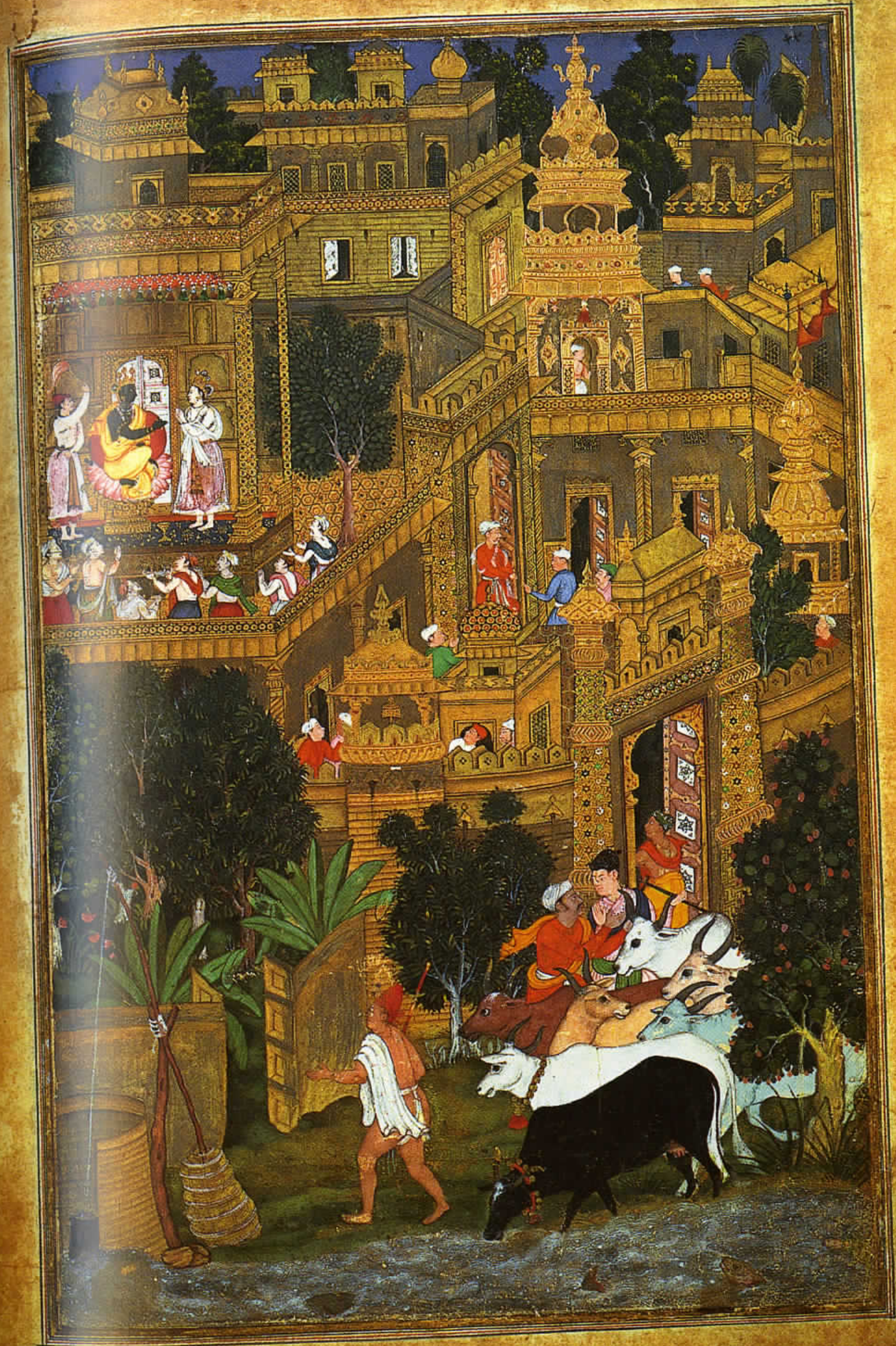
At Akbar's command, his trusted noble Abul Fazl assumed the task of chronicling the monarch's daily activities. The painting workshop produced an illustrated biography of this *Akbarnama* or 'Tales of Akbar' in which pages of pure text were interspersed with illustrated pages that occasionally carried a line or two of text. Several illustrations were conceived as double-page spreads. This manuscript illustrates the maturity of the Mughal style. The two facing pages depicting Akbar restraining elephant Havai seethe with energy (196). Basavan, who was responsible for the composition, made effective use of the diagonal movement across the two pages. The sweeping action, the billowing waters, the numerous details like the goats at the water's edge, swimmers and oarsmen in the act of rowing are accorded as much attention as the emperor upon his elephant. The horizon is placed high as is usual in Mughal paintings; often it is beyond the upper margin which cuts landscape or architecture in an arbitrary manner. Basavan has created an effect of perspective with boats in the distance painted much smaller than those in the foreground. The palace from which Akbar's minister has emerged to beg Akbar to dismount, as well as other monuments in the pages of the *Akbarnama*, are the painted equivalents of the monuments at Fatehpur Sikri. Abul Fazl's words record the scene depicted by Basavan (*Akbarnama*, ch XXXVII):

196 Overleaf
Akbar Restrains Havai, facing pages from the *Akbarnama*, *c.*1590. Watercolour on paper; each 35·2 × 22·2 cm, $13\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ in. Victoria & Albert Museum, London

> Havai was a mighty animal and reckoned among the special elephants … Strong and experienced drivers who had spent a long life in riding similar elephants mounted him with difficulty … That royal cavalier [Akbar] … one day without hesitation mounted this elephant in the very height of its ferocity … After that he pitted him against elephant Ran Bagha … The loyal and experienced who were present were in such a state as had never happened to them before … Great and small raised hands of entreaty … Havai looked neither behind nor before and … went like the wind in pursuit of the fugitive. After running a long way the elephants came to the edge of the River Jamuna and went to the head of the great bridge behind him … Owing to the great weight of these two mountain forms the pontoons were sometimes submerged

از پی او بران جسر برآمده دوید و کشتیهای جسر از گرانی هیکل آن دو کوه پیکر گاه در آب فرو میرفت

197
Akbar Hunting in an Enclosure, from the *Akbarnama*, c.1590. Watercolour on paper; 32·1 × 18·8 cm, 12⅝ × 7⅜ in. Victoria & Albert Museum, London



198
Krishna Enthroned in the Golden City of Dvarka, from the *Harivamsa* c.1585. Watercolour on paper; 23·9 × 17·3 cm, 9 × 6¾ in. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

and sometimes lifted up. The royal servants flung themselves into the water on both sides of the bridge and went on swimming until the elephants had traversed the whole of the bridge and got to the other side.

The naturalism evident in such pages is seen in neither the Iranian tradition with its other-worldly colours and its highly stylized figures, nor the earlier indigenous painting style of, for instance, Jain manuscripts. It may have been Akbar's own interest in realism, together with the European prints arriving at the Mughal court, that encouraged his artists to create this new style using naturalistic colours.

Another magnificent double-page composition depicts an imperial hunting technique known as *qamargah* in which animals were enclosed within a circular stockade while beaters drove

the game towards the emperor. The left-hand page created by Miskin, known for his complex compositions with several centres of interest (197), depicts Akbar, accompanied by trained cheetahs and hunters, galloping through the enclosure firing arrows at trapped beasts. This page was coloured by Mansur who was later to become a specialist in painting flora and fauna. The circular composition highlights the impossibility of containing all the action within a page. It was during one such hunt, at the age of thirty-six, that Akbar had one of two mystic experiences reported in his biography; disgusted by the slaughter, he subsequently banned the qamargah.

From Akbar's extensive translations of Hindu texts there emerges a superb page from the Harivamsa or Genealogy of Vishnu, depicting god Krishna painted in the traditional deep blue, and enthroned in the golden city of Dvarka (198). The artist uses multiple perspective to show us innumerable details of both the interior and exterior of this splendid palace, while the simple cowherds in the foreground tell the tale of village life. The feeling of receding space is conveyed by the large scale of the foreground figures compared with the small enthroned figure of Krishna.

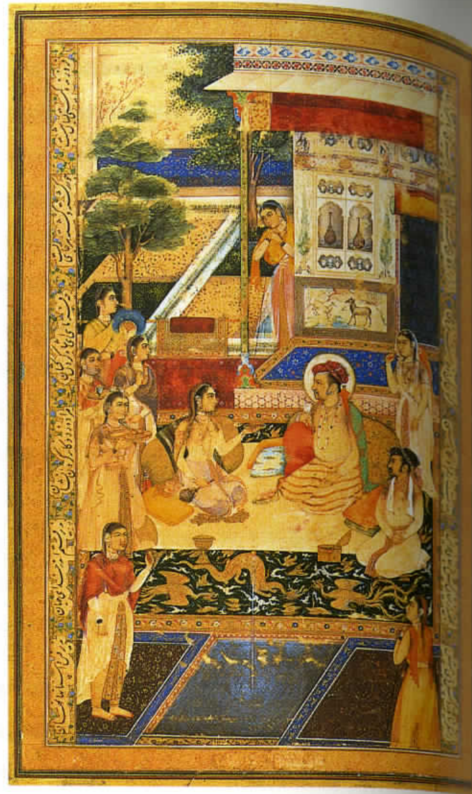
199
The Crucifixion, after a European engraving, c.1590. Watercolour on paper; 32 × 20 cm, 12½ × 7⅞ in. British Museum, London

Copies of European paintings of Christ, the Madonna, the Last Supper, St John and a variety of allegorical themes were created for the pleasure of the Mughal emperors. Such images should not be interpreted as evidence of Christian leanings; they were no more than exotic curiosities. The art of copying was highly respected in Mughal India. One of the sources was an eight-volume polyglot Bible with engraved frontispieces presented to Akbar by Father Monserrate, head of the Jesuit mission at Goa. Also known to the artists, and copied closely, were the works of several German and Flemish engravers, including Albrecht Dürer. *The Crucifixion* is an example of the Christian paintings made for Akbar (199); the heavy modelling of the figure of Christ suggests that the artist may also have had a crucifix at hand. Its colouring hints that artists had access to more than black-and-white prints; perhaps imported tapestries gave them a sense of the European use of colour.

Akbar was particularly interested in textiles, and his workshops produced fine-quality velvets, silks and cottons. Carpets too were highly valued, being used to cover the floors of palaces, tombs and tents; an exquisite pictorial carpet woven around 1590 consists of a series of vignettes that includes a hunting scene with a cheetah on a bullock cart, and a phoenix approaching lion-like creatures (200). The art of Akbar's court represents a dynamic phase of Mughal culture in which diverse elements were syncretized; it established the basis for future Mughal artistic development.

The reign of Akbar's son Jahangir ('World Seizer', r.1605–27) witnessed a change in the role of women who had thus far been heavily veiled and secluded from public view. Jahangir's wife Nur Jahan ('Light of the World'), whom he married in 1611, was a charismatic and forceful personality who issued *farmans* or official orders, and even had coins struck in her name. She traded with Europeans in luxury goods, received petitions from nobles and was a superb rifle markswoman. One of her most significant architectural contributions was a small but

200
Pictorial carpet, *c.*1580–90, Cotton warp and weft, woollen pile; 243 × 154 cm, 95⅝ × 60⅝ in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



201
Nur Jahan Hosting a Banquet for Jahangir and Prince Khurram. Watercolour on paper; 25·2 × 14·2 cm, 10 × 5½ in. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

exquisitely bejewelled marble tomb at Agra for her father, Itimad al-Dawla, constructed at the centre of a *char-bagh* garden divided by four waterways. In a painting of Nur Jahan hosting a feast for her husband and prince Khurram (later emperor Shah Jahan), she is depicted seated on a pictorial carpet sharing the stage equally with her husband (201). It was undoubtedly her example that now permitted Mughal artists to focus on women as the subject matter of their paintings.

The Mughal passion for gardens was developed by Jahangir and Nur Jahan who explored both the terraced hillside garden and the riverfront garden. Jahangir was especially enamoured of the valley of Kashmir with its idyllic town of Srinagar situated along the Dal Lake, which he planned to use as his official summer residence. He wrote enthusiastically in his memoirs, the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*):

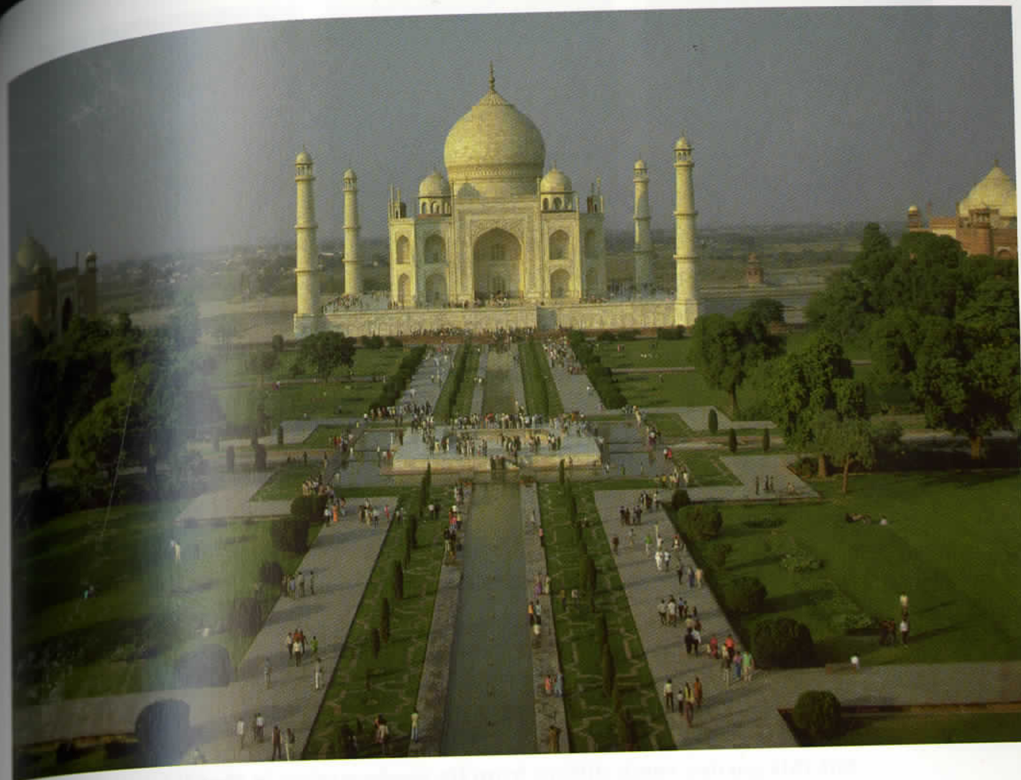
> Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring … a delightful flower-bed, and a heart-expanding heritage … Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all descriptions. There are running streams and fountains beyond count. Wherever the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water.

Jahangir and his son Shah Jahan planned the perfectly symmetrical Shalimar ('abode of love') Gardens in which a natural spring flows to the lake via a canal that forms the main axis of the garden. A series of terraces was laid out along the gently sloping hillside with ponds, lateral conduits, pavilions and platforms. Shalimar, planned mainly as Jahangir's personal royal garden, is divided into three terraced sections; from the centre of each an architectural feature extends across the channel and overlooks the cascading waters. The lowest level, the area of public audience, has a black marble throne platform that rises above the waters. The second level has the private audience pavilion (of which little remains today), while at the top is a black marble pleasure pavilion, the garden's main architectural feature, built by Shah Jahan. Since the gardens were used as much at night as during the day, recessed niches were carved into the low walls enclosing the water channel to contain lamps that would illuminate the water. Kashmir is renowned for its numerous Mughal terraced gardens, laid out by members of the royal family and nobles. In other parts of his empire Jahangir built riverfront gardens in which the architectural accent was no longer on the central axis, but arranged along a waterfront terrace.

Jahangir's outstanding architectural achievement was a tomb for his father Akbar, built at Sikandra near Agra, in the centre of a *char-bagh* garden. Unlike Humayun's tomb, however, the plan of this red sandstone building in five storeys is more like that of a palace. A central square room housing the sarcophagus has a ceiling that reaches up to the third floor; a gem-inlaid marble cenotaph rests on the topmost level within a courtyard enclosed by screens of white marble but completely open to the

202
Gateway to Akbar's tomb, Sikandra, c.1610

203
Taj Mahal, Agra, 1631–43



sky. The reason for the curious disregard for damage from the elements lies perhaps in the verse inscribed on the entrance gateway: 'May his [Akbar's] soul shine like the rays of the sun and the moon in the light of God.' The tomb structure with its many crowning kiosks is reminiscent of the Panch Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri. Equally striking is the decorative treatment of the imposing gateway, surmounted by four slender marble minarets, in which elaborate geometric patterns and large floral designs created from white marble and multi-coloured stones are inlaid on the basic fabric of red sandstone (202). The continuous bands of calligraphy in white marble include references to the gardens of paradise:

Hail blessed space happier than the garden of Paradise
Hail lofty buildings higher than the divine throne …
These are the gardens of Eden,
enter them and live forever.

With emperor Shah Jahan, Mughal architecture made use of marble more extensively than ever before, and like all other Mughal tombs Shah Jahan's renowned Taj Mahal (203) is replete with the imagery of paradise. Indeed, the visitor about to enter through the great red sandstone doorway leading into the complex is greeted with this verse from the Koran, in black marble calligraphy inset on the white marble border that runs around the gateway arch (*sura* 89, lines 27–30):

But O thou soul at peace,
Return thou unto thy Lord, well-pleased, and well-pleasing unto Him,
Enter thou among my servants,
And enter thou My paradise.

The spectacle of the Taj, rising in marble eminence upon its raised platform at the far end of a formal garden, evokes a sense of awe and wonder. The simplicity of the proportions creates its effect of symmetry and harmony: it is exactly as

wide as it is high (55 m or 180 ft), and the height of its dome is the same as the height of its arched façade. It is flanked by two identical monuments of red sandstone inlaid with marble, of which the left one is a mosque, the other being its architectural replica referred to as a *javab*, or an answer or echo, whose only purpose is to balance the symmetry.

But this garden tomb differs from its predecessors in that it is not placed at the centre of the *char-bagh*; rather it is located at the far end from its entrance gateway, to be approached through the garden, which is some 305 m (1,000 ft) square. The central, raised marble tank is visualized as a replica of the celestial tank of abundance. The original garden conception included a plan to ensure that each quadrant would have flowers in bloom at specified times throughout the year. These included the carnation, iris, tulip, hyacinth, jasmine, lotus, marigold, narcissus and zinnia. Fruit trees were planted along the walls where they would not block the view. Flowers that relate to paradise were duplicated on the Taj in marble carving as well as inlay (204–206). Thin sections of precisely cut semi-precious stones and gemstones were inlaid into the white marble in the technique known as *pietra dura*. Inlaid stones include jade, lapis, yellow amber, carnelian, jasper, amethyst, agate, heliotrope and green beryl. Subtle shading effects were achieved by using stones of varying degrees of

colour: a single flower may contain as many as thirty-seven pieces of inlay.

[illegible]4–206 [illegible] of the [illegible] dura [illegible]tion, Taj [illegible] Agra, [illegible]–43

Recent research suggests that the Taj complex may relate not so much to paradise *per se*, but more specifically to paradise on the Day of Judgement, which Islam conceives in terms analogous to that of Christianity. The Taj itself may have been visualized as the Throne of God; possibly the four minarets are supports for the canopy of the throne. The marble platform at the centre of the *char-bagh* may represent the platform where Prophet Muhammad will decide upon the fate of souls. A study of the numerous inscriptions engraved on various portions of the monument reveals that every verse from the Koran that speaks about the Day of Judgement is present, while no other koranic verse is given a place. One such inscribed chapter (*sura* 82) on the west door commences:

When the Sky shall be cleft asunder –
When the Stars shall be scattered –
When the Seas shall be poured forth –
And when the Graves shall be overturned –

Islamic tradition says that such chapters should be recited by those who would like to witness the end of the world enacted before their eyes. It is difficult to believe that they would have been intended solely for a mausoleum for a beloved wife.

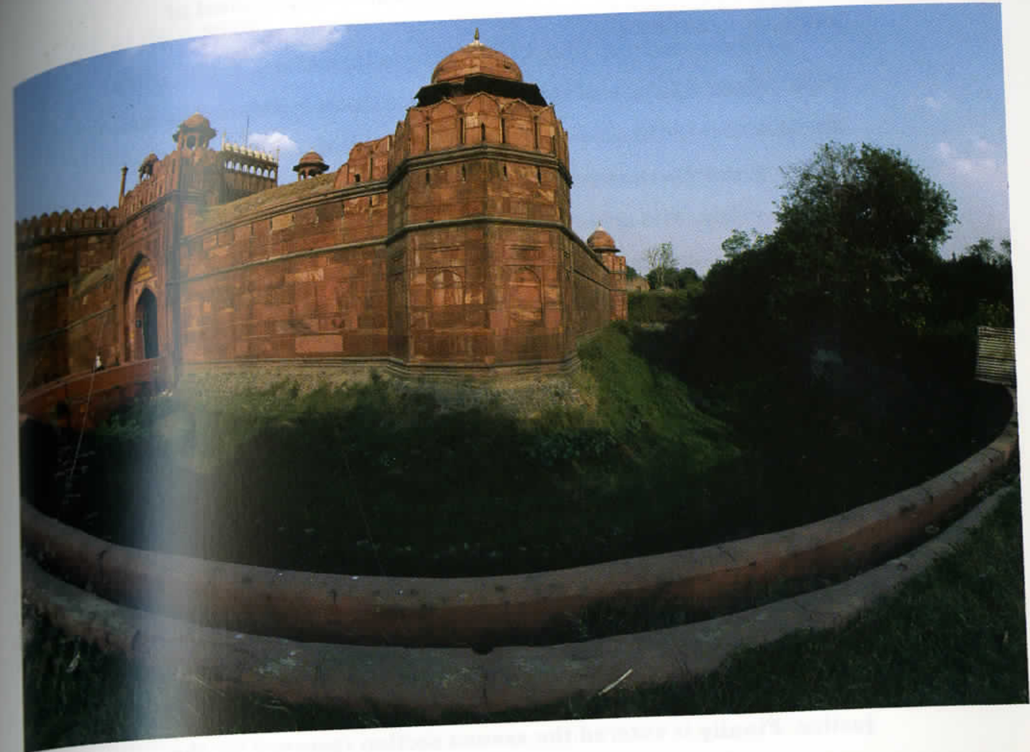
The central tomb inside the Taj is of Mumtaz Mahal, with Shah Jahan to one side; both are cenotaphs, and the actual bodies rest in a crypt. In the Islamic tradition the most blessed burial place is beneath the Throne of God. Contrary to popular tradition, it appears that the mausoleum was always conceived as a resting place for Shah Jahan too.

Even more intriguing is the Mehtab Bagh or Moonlight Garden on the opposite bank from the Taj Mahal, which seems to have been part of the original conception. A recent joint project by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, has uncovered a great octagonal

pool in which the Taj would be reflected by moonlight. Beyond is a garden, the exact width of the Taj garden, with walls and corner towers aligned exactly with those of the Taj. It would appear that the Taj did not have an asymmetrical setting, but that taking into account the Mehtab Bagh, it stood at the very centre of an immense garden, like all other royal Mughal tombs.

The planning of this vast complex and the creation of its symbolic programme was no small challenge to the emperor, his architect Ustad Ahmed Lahori and his calligrapher Amanat Khan. Even hydraulic considerations were necessary. As the Jamuna flows along the northern edge of the Taj terrace, the architect ingeniously incorporated several cylindrical wells into the foundations to withstand the effects of flooding. Water for the garden was collected by an elaborate system of storage tanks and pumps, and brought to the grounds through underground pipes, which are still in use; the original pump had to be replaced when it was dismantled by the British to discover how it functioned. The terrace and mausoleum proper, begun in 1631, seem to have taken shape in six years; the rest of the complex, including the garden and the various structures that comprise the gateway, were completed by 1643.

Returning to Delhi from Agra, Shah Jahan built himself a new capital city, choosing virgin soil overlooking the Jamuna. Commenced in 1638 and almost complete ten years later, it was given the name Shahjahanabad, literally Abode of Shah Jahan. The city encompassed 50 hectares (125 acres) and was surrounded by a fortified wall with fourteen major gates, of which only three survive. The two main streets, Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazaar, were long, straight and broad, flanked by pillared galleries, while an ample water canal ran through the centre of each. Chandni Chowk, or Silver Square, was the scene of much building activity sponsored by the women of the city. Shah Jahan's favourite daughter Jahan Ara constructed a garden; his third wife Fatehpuri Begum built a mosque; several



207–208
The Red Fort, Delhi, c.1638–48
Above
General view, showing moat
Right
Start of water channel running through the palace

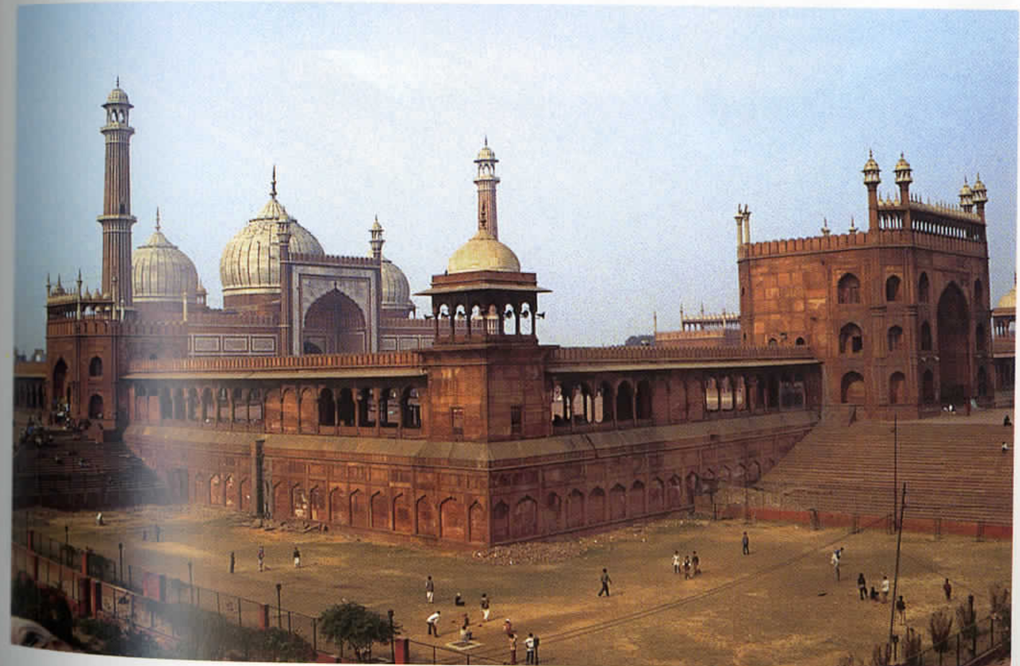
other court ladies did likewise. It is estimated that some 400,000 people – kings, nobles, merchants and servants – lived in the city, whose layout exemplifies Shah Jahan's ideal of bilateral symmetry.

Shah Jahan's palace of red sandstone, known today simply as the Red Fort (207), lies on the eastern edge of the city along the banks of the Jamuna which, today, has shifted its course considerably. The other three sides of the palace are surrounded by a moat once connected to the river. Marble pavilions and halls were laid out along the riverfront, and through them all ran a water channel known as the Canal of Paradise. Water brought in from the river entered this canal by way of a marble ramp (208) that led into a lotus-shaped pool in the northernmost building. From there it filled the royal baths, then ran through the elegant Hall of Private Audience in which is inscribed the oft-quoted verse 'If there be a paradise on earth, this is it, this is it, this is it.' The canal then flowed through the emperor's personal bedroom chambers, beneath a marble trellis screen that carries a carving of the scales of justice. Finally it entered the *zenana* section reserved for the royal women where the water was caught in a large, marble lotus-shaped pool.

209–210
The Red Fort, Delhi, c.1638–48
Far left
Throne in the Hall of Public Audience
Left
Imported plaque of Orpheus playing the lute

211 Right
Jami mosque, Shahjahanabad, c.1650–6

At right angles to these residential palaces is the public axis along which lies the pillared Hall of Public Audience where Shah Jahan heard petitions. Against the rear wall is the emperor's lofty marble balcony-throne with a marble canopy inset with semi-precious stones (209). Its backdrop consists of indigenous, white marble plaques inlaid with semi-precious stones, interspersed with imported Florentine plaques of inlaid black marble. Placed directly above the emperor's head is an imported marble plaque depicting Orpheus playing the lute while wild animals rest at his feet (210); its use may signify little more than the magnitude of Shah Jahan's reach. Seated upon this balcony-throne, it is reported that the emperor gave audience each day at noon; standing before him, in strict order of rank, was an entire assembly from nobles and rajas, through *mansabdar*s to the poor. Facing his subjects thus was perhaps Shah Jahan's way of emphasizing his role as a just ruler, and embodying Mughal concepts of kingship; at the same time, one



212 Shah Jahan as Connoisseur of Jewels, c.1620. Watercolour and gold on paper; 38·9 × 26·2 cm, 15¼ × 10⅜ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

wonders if indigenous ideas of giving *darshan* were assimilated into the 'performance'.

The imposing south gate of the fort led directly to Shah Jahan's Jami mosque (211) built of red sandstone and marble and located at an angle between the city's two main streets, upon a natural rocky outcrop. It is approached by steep stairs and its *qibla* wall is embellished with a tall, arched façade, three bulbous marble domes and two tall minarets. It was begun in 1650, and apparently 5,000 masons worked on it every day for six years.

Shah Jahan was a connoisseur of gems; in most portraits he is holding a gem or jewel, and in one he assesses the quality of

213 Right 'Taj Mahal' emerald, c.1630–50. 4 × 5·1 cm, 1½ × 2 in. Private collection

214 Centre right Pendant made for emperor Shah Jahan, c.1637–8. Jade; 4·5 × 3·8 cm, 1¾ × 1½ in. Kuwait National Museum

215 Far right Cameo portrait of emperor Shah Jahan, c.1660. Sardonyx, rubies and silver mount; diam. 3·2 cm, 1¼ in. Kuwait National Museum

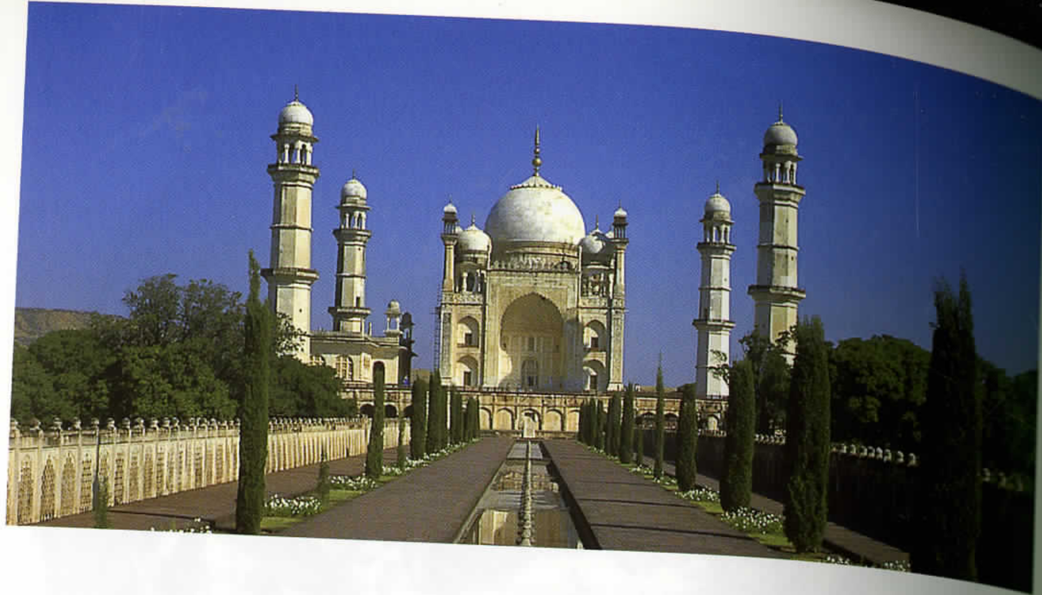
216 Below right Shah Jahan's wine cup, 1657. White jade; L.14 cm, 5½ in. Victoria & Albert Museum, London

gemstones (212). He wore extravagant jewellery in the form of necklaces, armlets, turban ornaments, pendants and rings (214–215). A unique Colombian emerald, known as the Taj Mahal emerald (213), weighing over 140 carats and carved with a stylized chrysanthemum, lotus and poppy, with leaves arranged asymmetrically, may have been set in a pendant worn by Shah Jahan himself. Jade was another favourite stone. An exquisite lobed wine cup in white jade, shaped like a halved fruit with a goat's head handle (216), carries Shah Jahan's monogram and the date 1657. Since jade was believed to be effective in counteracting poison, it was specially favoured for cups; it was also believed to bring victory, and was widely used, frequently encrusted with gems, for Mughal dagger handles, scabbards and other weaponry fittings. Ivory too was popular and the occasional Mughal ivory gunpowder flask survives. Mughal taste for the exotic is seen in a Chinese Yuan dynasty dish (217), produced between 1350 and 1400, depicting a mythical deer-like creature leaping through a plant-filled landscape. The dish was inscribed with Shah Jahan's name and the date 1653.

Shah Jahan's son Awrangzeb, who fought his way to the throne by defeating his brothers and imprisoning his father in the Agra fort, was more orthodox in his Islamic faith than his predecessors, but continued to uphold the building tradition of the Mughals. Inside Shah Jahan's Red Fort palace complex at Delhi, he added an exquisite little marble mosque, known as Moti Masjid or Pearl Mosque, as his private chapel. He also added outer defensive gates to the palace complex, evoking the disparaging remark from the imprisoned Shah Jahan: 'You have made the fort a bride and set a veil before her face.' Awrangzeb's striking architectural achievement, the Great Mosque at Lahore in Pakistan, is the largest in the subcontinent and can accommodate congregations of 60,000 people. While it continues the mosque tradition of the Mughals, in its interior decoration it replaces marble with painted plasterwork in relief.

217
Shah Jahan's Chinese Yuan dish, c.1350–1400. Blue-and-white porcelain; diam. 46·7 cm, 18⅜ in. Asia Society Galleries, New York

Awrangzeb spent the second half of his reign largely in the Deccan. From his imperial camp he issued orders for campaigns against the Deccani sultans; he also waged war against the Hindu Maratha chiefs who had severed ties with the Bijapur Sultanate and established a compact kingdom that propagated a Maratha nationalism based on Hindu religion and homeland. In the Deccan town of Aurangabad, Awrangzeb built a mausoleum for his wife (218) that perhaps aimed at emulating the splendour of the Taj Mahal in sandstone and burnished stucco with a marble interior. This last of the imperial garden tombs is placed conspicuously at the centre of a *char-bagh*



218
Mausoleum for Awrangzeb's wife, Aurangabad, c.1678

garden. While its proportions may reflect an altered aesthetic, it lacks the harmony of the earlier monument. It makes no use of inlay, and its startling white appearance is the effect, not of polished marble, but of burnished stucco.

Mughal India is estimated to have had a population of 100 million people; during the 150-year rule of the Mughals, the empire supported a standard of life comparable with that of contemporary Europe. While Mughal rule continued for another 150 years after Awrangzeb, the centre became vulnerable, and by the mid-eighteenth century its territory was confined to the environs of Delhi. During this time, however, art continued to flourish in outlying Mughal provinces such as Murshidabad (see 96) or Avadh with its capital at the vibrant city of Lucknow. In 1858, the British exiled and imprisoned the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah II, and made India a crown possession.

14