



# Tent Panel illustrate *Gandaberunda*

Anamika Pathak

The nature loving rulers from north and south of medieval period were known for constructing gardens around monuments and have sometimes replicated even in their garments and furnishings. 'Qanats' or tents, among furnishing, are the most prominent examples, which illustrate the attractive gardens. Variety of fabric (cotton, silk or velvet) have been used for making of full tent along with *chhatbandi*, canopy, panels etc., which were decorated with gold painted, block printed, woven or embroidered techniques.

National museum has a large 'qanat' or 'tent' of single piece, which beautifully illustrate five panels of 157 x 82 cm size each, while full size of tent is 450 x 223 cm. Decorated with mythical bird, animal intermingled with flowering pattern this tent is an exquisite example of *kalamkari* from South India perhaps Golkonda, dates back to mid-17th century. The term *kalamkari* refers to hand drawn work, where outline is done with *kalam* (pen, which are specially created by the artists) done on cotton base fabric, which is pre-treated by alum to achieve the bright and even tone of the colour. The design is drawn in a mordant solution and the cloth dye in an iron-rich black dye bath, the colour

adheres to those areas, which are treated with the mordant. This process is repeated to achieve more colours to the pattern and finally additional colours are painted directly onto the cloth to create more colours to the object. <sup>(1)</sup>

Design of 'qanat' show the flowering tree of different style under lobed niche while narrow vertical floral border, of contrast colour, divides the two panels and oval finale on top reminds the pole used for construction of tents. Both the portions of *qanat*, upper and lower, illustrate double borders; row of arches and floral creeper border on the upper border and pair of floral border is at lower end. The assemblage of three vases is on both the outermost panels. Two of the vases are filled with flowers and leaves but the central vase gives rise to a cypress tree, overlaid with attractive flowers.

Birds sit, strut or fly between the leaves, creates the garden ambience. Two panels, next to these, are also filled with stylized trees and creepers that give forth a dazzling variety of flowers and fruit, crowned prominently by pineapple. <sup>(2)</sup> The lower portion of left side panel illustrates pair of lion hunting deer while two mythical creatures are on right side panel.



'Qanat' showing the flowering tree of different style and Gandbherunda Photo courtesy: Author

These mythical creatures stand around rock style arrangement are having *maker-mukha* (Crocodile face), looking backwards, while body is very thin, like dog's body. Centre panel is the most striking one, show *gandaberunda*,<sup>(3)</sup> the double headed eagle; the mythical creature, swoops down and grips two miniature elephants, whose only traces are left. We see the underside of bird's body with its claws clenched and wings tucked in a steep dive, stylized feathers swoop out of the body and fill the space in an outstanding pattern. Apart from these main features, the remaining portion of *qanat* panels are filled with flowers, birds, butterflies, fruits, leaves, geometric motifs etc. A tent with two panels done in similar composition and style is in Victoria and Albert museum London.<sup>(4)</sup> Motifs worked in maroon, white, green and blue colours have come out well on the off-white cotton base fabric, which has two joints. The loosely woven cotton lining has three joints and all joints are hand stitched.

These *qanats* are one of the most important items of furnishing, which were often got mention in literature,<sup>(5)</sup> in *bahi's*<sup>(6)</sup> and portray in miniature paintings<sup>(7)</sup>. *Ain-i-Akbari*, the Akbar period manuscript, written by Abul Fazl devote a chapter on *Farrash Khana*, department specially dedicated to tents since emperors have used these tents at the time of war or hunting. This department was maintained by *Farrash*, whose sole occupation was the physical care of the tents. The text mentions about the types of tent, their size, double storied tent, different names of tents, persons involved in construction of tents and many interesting information.<sup>(8)</sup>

The imperial palace tents were the encampments of leading nobles, all arranged according to rank and established protocol as mentioned in Bernier's account also.<sup>(9)</sup> Several Mughal paintings also portrays the majestic tents; whether the submission of Rana Amar Singh I<sup>(10)</sup> or Krishna Enthroned.<sup>(11)</sup>

Sometimes these tents have been shown very prominently as depict in a Mewar school mid-18<sup>th</sup> century painting.

It shows a large camp of Maharana Sangram Singh II, where he is receiving Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur. The tent and canopy has been done in double layer; inner layer show floral pattern under an arch on white background, while outer wall is of plain red colour. The entrance gate side has additional tent wall, which is of deep mahroon colour decorated with gold printed/painted floral pattern. Yet another painting show Akbar hunting a *qamargah* (enclosure), here circular tent show panels with cypress tree and flower vase arranged alternatively under an ach on the red background.<sup>(13)</sup> Although number of painted, printed or embroidered tent panels are in various collections, but it is difficult to find such artistically created royal complete tentage.

Still there are few worth mentioning complete tent, which are known for their exquisite workmanship. The famous ones are 'Lal Dera' of Mehrangarh in Jodhpur museum, 'Man Singh' of Jaipur in City Palace museum, Jaipur, Rajasthan and 'Tipu Sultan tent' of Mysore in Clive museum, Powis, United Kingdom. <sup>(14)</sup>

With the good line work, powerful illustration of *gandabarunda*, lion hunting, stylized tree filled with flowers, leaves, birds, butterflies etc makes this National Museum tent panel an excellent example, whose artists are not known.

### Bibliography

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2. Portuguese took pineapple to Brazil and then to India in around 1550.
3. *Gandaberunda*; the mythical creature is more visible in Deccani iconography and found in stone or bronze sculptures and has state emblem of Karnataka also.
4. Sardar. M. in *Sultans of Deccan India 1500-1700 Opulence and Fantasy* (ed) Haidar N.N and Sardar M., Metropolitan Museum of art, New York, USA, 2015, p-276, pl-165.
5. Especially in Mughal and sometimes in European's traveller's account
6. Day to day accounts of royal holdings.
7. Beach. M.C., Mughal Tents in *Orientalism*, vol-16. No-1, 1985, pp-32-43.
8. Abu L Fazal., *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann, New Delhi, 1965, pp-55-57
9. Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire AD 1656-1668*, England, 1891, pp-366-67.
10. Beach, *op. cite*, Fig-1, p-33. It is in Padshah-nama manuscript, Mughal, c.1640, The Royal Library, Windsor.
11. Beach, *op. cite*, Fig-4, p-36. It is in Razm-nama manuscript, Mughal, c.1582-4.
12. Crill. R, *The Fabric of India*, London 2015, pl-135, p-130
13. Crill, *op.cite*, pl-117, p-114. It is folio from Akbarnama Manuscript in Victoria and Albert museum London.
14. Rahul Jain, *Textiles and Garments at the Jaipur Court*, Delhi, 2016, pp: 126-129