

Studying Functions of Visual Elements and Pictorial Provisions in Iranian Painting

(Case Study of Sultan Muhammad's Mi'raj Painting in Khamsa of Nizami)

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Abstract

Ascension event as one of the most miraculous events of Islam history has attracted attention of scholars and artists over different ages and eras and has been manifested within many artistic works directly or symbolically. Meanwhile, painting art has paid special attention to this astonishing event either in conceptual or in aesthetic part. Many images have been created in Iranian painting with centrality of ascension (mi'raj) of Islam prophet. However produced works vary in terms of quality and narrations based on Iran painting style and affected by doctrinal conditions of its own time and viewpoint of proponents. In this respect t, famous and prominent painting of ascension from Safavid era of Khamsa version painted by Sultan Muhammad with unique and noticeable features. This paper aims to examine feature of Iranian painting art and visual components of art through descriptive-analytical approach and with documentary method. For doing so, ascension image of Sultan Muhammad, famous painter of Safavid era has been selected as sample due to similarity of texture and text and comprehension of depicted images. The main question of the paper is that from which narration do visual elements of images originate and what meaning and notion do they imply? Findings suggest that adoption of pictorial components and visual elements results in occurrence of mysterious, mystic and interpretational narration in Khamsa image.

Keyword: ascension event (mi'raj), art image, painting art, Sultan Muhammad's ascension painting.

Introduction:

Astonishing event of ascension represents one of the highest religious concepts which has commanded the attention of painters over all times and many paintings are emanated from it. Importance of this concept within Iranian painting is to such extent that we fail to find an image with more religious and deeper feature than it within Islam world (Welsh, 1996). Amazement of ascension event and its capability to be imaged caused that almost over all eras a masterpiece would be created in this theme. However, available woks are not featured

by identical trend and form in terms of the point of occurrence of visual and pictorial elements and different narrations and qualities are depicted on this event in terms of style and governmental and doctrinal conditions and proponents viewpoints. Over different times and eras of reign of Islamic governments in Iran, Muslim artists manifested their inherent genius and creativity within different forms and aspects for visual visualization and expressing different aspects of Quran artistic miracle. At the same time, respect and situation of holy Quran in hearts of Muslims caused that this holy book never would be depicted by painting independently, however enthusiasm of libraries and artists toward picturing Quran verses caused formation Quranic theories and literary and art works and scripts affected by holy Quran. In this respect, a significant painting is available from Safavid era which is created by support of Shah Tahmasb. This image is related to Khamsa Tahmasbi version and is considered as great art achievements of Sultan Muhammad and is provided in Tabriz school within years 1539-1543. Size of this image is 28.7x18.6 cm and is kept in London museum. According Welch, in the painting of Prophet Ascension of Khamsa version, Islamic religious painting is soared to its climax (Welch, 1976) (fig. 1). Among ascension paintings, this work is of high position and its significance is to such extent that has affected on ascension paintings of its subsequent eras. This work is featured by special pictorial, visual and symbolic elements which express a different level of meaning and quality on ascension event. In other word, visual elements and pictorial components are provided along two different (mysterious and missionary) narrations of ascension. It is needed to explain that pictorial components are a set of pictorial and visual factors like visual elements or images which aimed to convey one influence of a set of special influences (Jenson, 2009). From other side, pictorial components contribute both in work composition and in its interpretation. Since most conducted studies have examined the imagery of ascension event, its historical area and examining images in terms of form and color and design and generally the appearance of the image and the greatest part as thematic study and narration structure and adoption of imagery elements and pictorial components are less addressed. Therefore, with regard to importance of this part of study, this paper aims to clarify this problem and seeks to look art imagery in Iranian painting from a new viewpoint. Similarly, this study contributes in extending studies regarding analyzing imagery works.



Figure 1: Ascension allegedly by Sultan Muhammad, a paper of Khamsa, Tabriz (1542), London, UK (Ajand, 2005).

Clarifying features of Iranian-Islamic painting

1- Insight feature:

Within Iranian painting, actual and realistic representation does not serve as apex of art work, however passing from material surface of objects and reaching to internal reality is matter of interest. Images depicted by painters are named as suspended images, because they lack a distinct material setting and they are otherworldly and ethereal. Iranian painter was never seeking to represent the nature and his works tend to have archetypal feature (Pakbaz, 1999). In fact, if there wasn't the special view of painter believing to world of ideas and arising from mysticism, perhaps some works so innovative and beautiful like ascension image of Sultan Muhammad never would come to existence at that time. In fact Iranian miniature is featured by mystic aspects by remaining in a horizon other than that of material world, however it has its own special life and movement and it is a shadow of joys and happiness of heavenly world (Nasr, 1996).

2- Thematic feature:

Islamic painting mostly has inseparable relation with Persian literature and religion and specially Quranic teachings. In Islamic Iran, imaginary in Iranian poem and painting are adapted with Quranic themes, such as those pure descriptions presented by orators on nature elements, objects and human being and it can be found in work of painters too (Pakbaz, 1999). Consistency of literary and historical texts with art images within different eras of Islamic reign in Iran caused that painting would help to visual historiography.

3- Structural feature:

Artistic method of Iranian painter was basically in contrary to naturalism and cannot be categorized within classifications considered by western academic art. In Islamic painting,

neither three dimensional space nor point perspective have been observed, and nor it is mere two dimensional like some modern abstract or ornamental works, nor it has subjective and personal images such as surrealist art. In this time, the concept of space in Iranian painting is related to otherworld with dimensions independent from tangible space (Tajvidi, 1996). Islamic painting is in a balance between objectivity and subjectivity and has enjoyed both of concepts by some provisions highly more advanced than its own time.

Depicted space in images is not material one, this isn't a false three dimensional space, and rather it is consisted of some levels stretched down to up and toward surroundings. Among best cases of this feature, it is depicted images from concepts arising from Quran in this time such as otherworldly event of ascension. One of main themes of Iranian painting is a perspective without shadow in which anything is made of limitless, otherworldly and valuable essence (Burkhart, 1997).

4- Practical feature:

Iranian painting in Safavid era worked further in contribution of depicting literary, epical, religious books and so one, especially holy themes such as ascension in the holy Quran. However, credit of insight, thematic and structural features is different from other types of illustrating around the world due to cultural and individual taste of customers. In this era, painting was mostly royal and splendid, as results it was far from general public access, however, illustrating the ascension facilitated public perception of ascension reality and it has been considered as a visual aesthetic type.

5- Technical feature:

During various Islamic eras, Iranian painting has been featured by delicate and skillful talent. Understanding quality of materials and identifying mysteries of work turns the painter into a dexterous craftsman. However, due to concentration of senses in frequent difficulties, it is featured by purity of behavior and well-disciplined and perfectionist quality and apex of painter's dexterity lies in its astonishing intricacy power which is product of a lifetime practice and hard work (Pakbaz, 1999).

6- Outward feature:

Light and color represent main components of painting art and visual space of Iranian painting works. These serve as inside and outside of a unified truth which is manifestation of God grace in the world and in this manner, this manifestation can be seen in the images. In Iranian painting, in addition to selecting and placing consistent colors, rhythm factor is of high importance in coloring as well. Color rhythm influences on rhythm of lines and designs and moderates or fosters it (Pakbaz, 1999).

Image of ascension in Iranian Painting

The most important criterion by which one can understand whether a given art product belongs to religious or holy realm or not, is presence or absence of its relation with high ethereal ideas. For finding out its actual trait, one should establish in the first place whether the art product reflect a hint of ethereal world or not? Or whether art work includes an unworldly message or not. Then one can study the work appearance aspect, material and substances used in it as well as modality or style of expression and artist skill and degree of conformity between immaterial content and physical facet. Finally by contemplating in

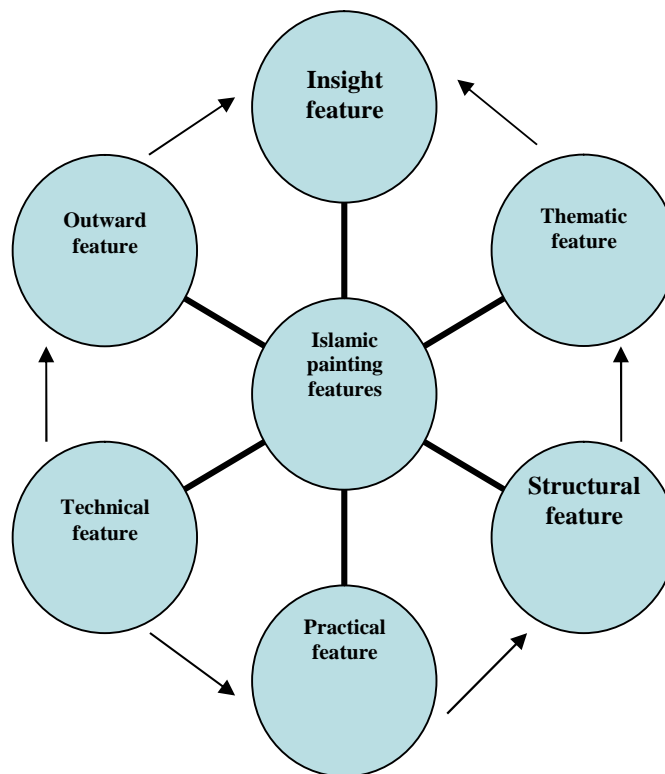


Figure 1: Features of Islamic painters (Ref: authors)

these problems one can engage in more intellectual studies, whether art work awaken heaven enthusiasm in us? Does it prompt gratitude toward Creator in us? Does it guide us to contemplation by smoothing the path to access on holy secrets? (Mishon, 2001). Ascension of prophet is one of themes that have been addresses abundantly in Islamic painting art, and painters and their proponents in any era have attempted to depict this great event. Painters who were engaged in illustrating Prophet's ascension had various objectives, for this purpose, their visual language is not only continuance of pictorial heritage, but also it is historical, political and religious linking element.

First image of mi'raj dates back to ilkhanate era in Rashidoddin's Jame-ol-tawarikh book

and Abu-Saeidi's mi'raj book. In Timurid era, mi'raj images have been turned into a necessary part of manuscripts with literary, epic, lyrical themes as well as selection of poems and it has been composed independently as Mi'raj book (Mi'rajnameh) as well. Among Mi'raj images in Safavid era, one can mention the prominent image of Sultan Muhammad and Mi'raj painting of Habib-os-Sir book. Following appearance of lithography in Iran at Qajar era, some images have been created by lithography at this era conveying a lot of points about Mi'raj story painting. Complete adaption of holy Quran teachings with human being nature gave rises to many common grounds between literary and art works with Quran teachings. As Titus Burkhart considered Islamic art as most outward and tangible facet of Islam (Burkhart, 1986). Following existence of ancient monotheist culture in Iran, especially by rise of Safavid dynasty with Shia official religion and by a 125-year ruling in which by support of artists, it played a significant role in excelling Islamic art and accordingly, it created many commonalities between literary and art scripts and works with Quranic teachings. Safavid reign was in close and direct relation with religious nature and it was derived from holy Quran concepts in many respects. Continuance and long life of this dynasty and its stability in religious and cultural aspects caused steadiness and strength of artist-religious tradition of Safavid School. In this era, art products with quite special nature again could be found in Iran (Scarchia, 2005). Searching hidden layer of influence of Quran teachings on works of artists of this era could be taken place through audience's affinity with text and content of verses and thereby the secret of love and fondness of these great men toward God can be revealed. Painting Quran sciences and fondness of god-seeker painters of Safavid era resulted in admittance of mystical hints in their works and this urged them to refer to prominent literary texts as a mediating element between Quran teachings and painting works. This event has taken place not by all painters of this time, rather in its most ideal manner, by some prominent painters of this era like Sultan Muhammad the painter.

Main visual element of image

- 1- **Line:** in Sultan Muhammad's image we encounter dominance of soft and fluid curved lines and elements of painting have elaborated finely and delicately. Rhythm of lines and quality of depicting them bring about a pleasant effect. Designing and sketching is unlimitedly fine and can be seen in all details. As line and motion are two visual phenomena occurring together and are related to each other (Halimi, 2005), the relation between surrounding lines and form of angels and their wings are consistent in Sultan Muhammad's painting and facilitates eye movement on them. Lines in Khamsa mi'raj image are consistent with mystic and ethereal content of image. In modality and quality of lines of each image, small and big format are of high importance in the image.
- 2- **Color:** in Sultan Mahmud's image, sky is colored in azure which symbolizes the night and infinite space. Protagonist, Prophet is depicted with green garment within golden flames granting him a particular sacredness and unworldliness. Green color implies his excelled essences and his sedate existence. Blue color of Gabriel among dark azure

contributes to highlighting his state and motion. Angels are picturesque by diverse colors and bring about an emotionally propitious arena, and proportion between warm and cold colors seems to be equal and moderate. Colors in the image have symbolic meanings and engender two different scene and manifestation for a single one moment of event. In Sultan Muhammad's image, colors are proportionated to mystic and mysterious manifestation and narration.

- 3- **Composition:** spiral composition in which Prophet is placed in the center and angels are its main protagonists are used in utmost of dexterity in Sultan Muhammad's image for expressing spiritual impression considered by the artist and further skill is observed in composition. Spiral composition manifests ascension movement of Prophet, rather than its steadiness. This composition is in harmony and coordination with other pictorial components denoting the ascension, such as state of placement of Buraq and fire flames and depicts well the ascension concept. In this work composition, relation between figures is exact and well-ordered and is highlighted. Spatial position of Prophet is visually as a point with high energy and it attract the attention. Although visual elements are a lot in Sultan Muhammad's image, however, due to accurate distance and order between elements, painting space is allowed to breath and an obvious coordination and unification is established among them. Angels in Sultan Muhammad's work are of uniform, regular and steady rhythm in work's composition.

as in a picture, a viewer seeks in a complex spectacle a form with higher visual stability, and with less chaotic relation with its surrounding, (Keps, 2010), in Sultan Muhammad's image, established distance between Prophet with angels and surrounding empty space fosters and highlights his value and position.

Composition process serves as the most determining step in solving the visual problem. Decisions taken in composition include the meaning and objective of visual work and have a strong influence on perception of its viewer (Donis, 2009). Thus, visual elements and components in Mi'raj painting are situated and composed in such manner that denotes the mystic and mysterious meaning of mi'raj event. In brief, in this painting, visual provisions and pictorial components are appeared so that would result in mysterious, dilemmatic and interpretative meaning and narration. In a work, modality of elements composition demonstrates quality of artistic expression. In other word, mystic and mysterious meaning and narration require special and creative visual quality and pictorial provision which can be found in Sultan Muhammad's painting.

Table 1: Image visual components (Ref: authors)

Visual elements	Khamsa Mi'raj image
Line	Soft and fluid, dominance of soft and curved lines, fine sketching, intricacy and designing details
Color	High diversity of colors, balanced adoption of warm and cold colors, symbolic expression of color
Composition	Spiral composition, dynamism of image space and demonstrating movement and life in throughout picture, emphasis on Prophet character based on spiral composition, unification and harmony among components, expansive space

Pictorial components of image

1- Prophet: he is the protagonist of mi'raj. Supremacy of Prophet Character is best depicted by situating in the center of picture and angels surrounding him. This is highlighted by adopting some other provisions. Such as veiling Prophet's face, color of garment, shining flames. The significant point is that adopted provisions in Sultan Muhammad's picture such as his position and relation with other components and his empty surrounding space establish its excellent centrality and significance.

Prophet garment in the picture is different with other characters in terms of design and color. In Sultan Muhammad's picture, Prophet puts on a red garment with green cloak, while shining flames in Sultan Muhammad's image surrounds all his holiness. Veiling on the Buraq on which Prophet is sit is of high importance, because denotes state and position of Prophet. Thus, veiling on the Buraq in this picture is one with finely designed flowers suggesting a serene, fresh and delightful place. Prophet's hands in this image as a sign of internal serenity are placed on his chest. One can note that in this picture, modality of illustration and pictorial provision considered for prophet figure such as direction of movement, especially vast shining flames around him, garment, turban, headwear and shape of hands underscore the mysterious and unworldly aspect of Prophet Character and introduce it as the protagonist actor of mi'raj. Similarly, special placement of Prophet and his graceful shape and form and angels' regular movement toward his holiness represent his high character and highlight him among numerous components depicted in the picture in the best manner (Fig, 2).



Figure 2: State and form of Prophet and Buraq in Khamsa image.

2- **Buraq:** Buraq is Prophet's steed in his spiritual journey and is one of most mysterious characters in Mi'raj with a body in shape of horse, a tail with shape of that of dog, and a head in shape of that of human. Body of Buraq in Sultan Muhammad's image is designed finely and beautifully with a soft trend. Buraq has crown and necklace and there is a veil on it as for sitting of Prophet. The important component is the direction of Buraq's movement that in Sultan Muhammad's picture, Buraq is directed forward and upward with a oblique state and is moving from bottom right to top left of image and shows the prophet in moving and soaring. Maybe one can definitely note that Buraq of Sultan Muhammad's image is the most splendid instance of illustrating Buraq in Islamic painting. Anyway, face and state of Buraq of Khamsa image featured by beauty, grace, agility and serenity. The used necklace intensifies this feature (Fig. 2).

3- **Fire flames:** fire flames are familiar component for showing holiness and ascension. Volume of flame also suggests the degree of sacredness of characters surrounded by it. In Khamsa image, entire prophet figure is blazed in shining flames including Buraq's head too. Unruly golden flames in the image directs look upward and shows Prophet's ascension and in addition to making the image vivid, it gives the image a mystical manifestation. Similarly, Gabriel has been distinguished from others by fire flames. In fact, in Khamsa image, flames of light are arising from whole of prophet's figure (Fig. 3).

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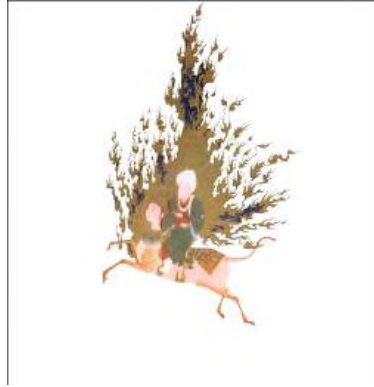


Figure 3: State and form of Prophet and fire flames in Khamsa image.

5- **Angels:** angels are among important components in forming composition and space of the image. In Sultan Muhammad image, eighteen angel figures who have encircled Prophet are illustrated (their total number is 19). In such manner that while holding heavenly gifts in hands, they are praising and welcoming Prophet. This manner of illustrating angels plays an important role in forming the ideal, heavenly meaning and balanced composition of the work and makes the space of image vivid and unworldly. Similarly in the image, in addition to more number of angels, diversity of garment design and color and states can be seen.

In Sultan Muhammad's image, gifts of angels are a lot and include obvious gifts such as garment, fruits, hat and shoes and hidden gifts which one cannot say about their nature properly and this adds to mysterious feature of image. In this picture, angels are doing different things such as diffusing perfume, praying and talking with each other. These actions are not only influential in making the scene active and dynamic, but also suggest an actual splendor. Angels' wings also are of high diversity, fineness, proportion and vividness of colors. In Sultan Muhammad's image, form, state and movement of angels are in an artistic relation with each other and featured by softness, delicacy and high fineness. Figure of angels with their balanced twists denotes Sultan Muhammad's skill and hand dexterity. Farness and nearness of components with each other in a picture serve as pictorial provision that brings about a different meaning. In this respect, in Khamsa image, angels have encircled around the Prophet in a spiral movement and by keeping the distance and are moving toward his shining presence just as butterfly hovers around candle light. While this establishes a dynamic and spiritual sense in the image, it also further elevates the high position of his Excellency (fig. 4).



Figure 4: Angels' situation in Khamsa image.

6- **Gabriel:** among angels, fineness and balanced twist is reflected obviously in the figure of Gabriel in Khamsa image. Gabriel undertakes the task of spiritual guidance of Prophet and showing him heaven wonders and describing them. He, in the Sultan Muhammad's image, in a garment different from other angels, with luminous flames around the head, fine and gorgeous wings and soft movement and mode in forward direction is guiding prophet. Garment blue color and its position and luminous flames are highlighting him and make it distinct from other angels. One can notice by mode and pointing of Gabriel's hand that the ascension is not finished and it should be continued.

From other side, form and state of Gabriel in the image is in harmony by dynamism and ascension movement of whole of image. In other word, some provisions considered for Gabriel of Khamsa image, such as position, movement and special state and luminous flames around his head places him in the third position as visual element and important character of mi'raj (following Buraq) and attracts the attention following figure of his holiness and his steed (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: Relation of prophet and Gabriel in Khamsa image.

Table 2: Clarifying visual elements of image (Ref: authors)

Khamsa ascension image	Visual components
First character of image, placing at the center of image, upward movement and soaring, graceful and mystic status, green garment	Prophet
Image second character, upward and soaring movement, fine and pretty status	Buraq
Large number, most important component in making the image space, with vivid colors, with various status, diverse and vivid wings, coordination and order is established among them.	Angels
Third character of image, fine status with balanced twists in figure, distinct coloring from other angels.	Gabriel
Vast volume around whole body of prophet, flame-like status with upward direction, around head of Gabriel, an important component for showing Prophet spirituality, highlighting his holiness.	Fire flames
Angel, role of clouds, moon and sun	Special components
Whole components bring about a mysterious and mystical expression and narration with a beautiful and splendid quality	summarizing

Visual and pictorial analysis of ascension event in Khamsa image

Prophet's ascension is one of the themes which have been extensively addressed in Islamic painting art, and in any art era, painters and their advocates attempted to depict this great event. Painters who depicted Prophet Mi'raj had various objectives. Their visual language is not only continuance of visual heritage, but also it serves as a historical, political and religious link. One of the most important paintings related to mi'raj is great image of Prophet's Mi'raj by Sultan Muhammad, the famous painter of Safavid era. This precious work is a complete example of a spiritual masterpiece. There is very scarce information as

for life of Master Sultan Muhammad, painter from Tabriz. It is not known in which time he has been born, however obviously he is from Tabriz. When Shah Esmaeil Safavid seized Tabriz from Ak Koyunlu in 1500, he seized their art heritage such as royal library art atelier and as Sultan Muhammad was already working in this studio, he falls in group of palace artists of Shah Esmaeil. As he was in the apex of art dexterity he happened to be on the cutting edge of Shah Esmaeil art studio. Within 1539 through 1542, a huge project has been launched for Shah Tahmasb and it was Khamsa of Nizami which held many religious and epic themes and today it belongs to Britain London Museum (number 226557). Number of some artists such as Sultan Muhammad has been recorded within the images of this project as well. One of famous images of Khamsa of Nizami, Prophet's Mi'raj has appeared from Sultan Muhammad's brush and serves as climax of painting excellence. In this painting, Sultan Muhammad appears as an intrinsic Sufi and brings about a painting that its essence and soul links man to the other world. Sultan Muhammad in the Prophet's Mi'raj painting which probably was its last work, consistent with its religious belief soars together with prophet to heaven. He detaches himself from earthen world and joins to ethereal word. In this composition, flames rising from surrounding of prophet's head represents as flames of his heart which outshined his other emotions and feelings and he has reach to the greater win and fullest good. In this picture, everything is in upmost of freshness: enthusiasm and sweetness of angels, grace and beauty of Gabriel ahead of mass of angels, intertwined clouds with twisted and dancing appearance and azure sky in a rhythmic movement all arises from rich emotion and passion of Sultan Mahmud. His masterpiece not only depicts doctrinal and mystical depth of this narration, but also suggests artistic power in adopting pictorial components such as refined forms, coordinated colors, robust and daring compositions, showing depth without perspective and above all, integration of pictorial components in presenting the truth of the this event. Sultan Muhammad has selected the moment of prophet entering to higher heavens as for his painting. In a part of spiritual journey, angels have come to welcome Prophet. Therefore, unlike some other painter who depicted the beginning of journey, or some who illustrate prophet inspecting Paradise or Hell, he has paid attention to middle part of journey (between origin and destination). The picture is highly rich in terms of sketching, composition, form, color and content. The overall shape of work is show in diagram 1 that is placed in a rectangular frame and it itself is divided into two golden part. There is a horizontal rectangle at the bottom of frame and the prominent golden square at the top. The main theme can be seen in the golden square, i.e. Prophet Ascension. Forms represent as spiral form and if we look at any angle of picture, finally we reach to image of Prophet at the center of image, namely to the ascension of his holiness which is veiled with a white mask. Prophet can be seen in a red garment and green cloak and a luminous halo like fire surround his head and moves upward. Frame is filled by angels welcoming prophet and each one serve him in some way or another and in sum they carry some gifts for him. An angel in yellow garment and green cloak and yellow and green wings places a tray of fire under Buraq's feet. This angel is paced within Golden Square and a part of his body lies in horizontal rectangle which establishes relation between

bottoms of frame with upper part and draws the look movement upwardly. The other angel is Gabriel which guides the prophet. Finally all these movement come to an end to Prophet moving outward of picture and is far from sight power of viewer and urges the viewer to contemplate that which secret is hidden behind this image. In line drawing of image showed in figure (2), angels are drawn so twisted and moving that it turned the work into a highly active and dynamic one. Geometrical order is distinct in this work proportions of frame are very close to a golden rectangle and as it is shown in diagram (3), by drawing the arc of half of significant square we obtain a frame which is roughly matching man frame of picture and if we detach the significant square from bottom, the line of significant square passes from beneath of prophet's face, in neck area. $\sqrt{2}$ Rectangle line also passes bottom margin of upper poems. Intersection center of rectangle diameters lies on whole figure of Buraq and Prophet. This dynamic composition causes that no visual disturbance would take place for eye. In diagram (4) one can see a golden pentagon in the image. Golden pentagon is one of geometrical shape made of mere golden proportions and as one can see prophet figure is placed at the center of this pentagon. All angels are turning around Prophet's head in a circular trend. Curved in this diagram are fully shown and in fact, these motifs gives centrality to the Prophet and is exhibited as an accent in the picture. As you can see though angels establish a circular form, however their dispersion and dynamism in the scene are proportional and harmonious. As it can be seen from diagram (2), eyesight lines are highly twisted and kinetic in this picture there is no robust horizontal or vertical line in any part of this image and this brings about a spiritual feature in the work, meanwhile all these lines are attained to a general unification in the image. However, the manner of placing of poems does not disturb the picture composition, while painter could seek a more interesting measure in this respect. This work also like other works of Sultan Muhammad is highly dynamic and lively, though one should note that dynamism in this work is highly more significant and interesting than his other works.

Basically forms suspension feature in space and lack of earthen support for them detach this work from any kind of repose, especially features of angels' garments with high twist and swirl as though a wind is blowing to them from left side. However, clouds swirl does not associate any special direction for wind, because anyone is stretched to some direction. Perhaps further repose can be perceived at the bottom of image with respect to upper part, yet it is obvious that throughout image is full of movement.

In Islamic Iranian chromatics, there is a system including seven colors namely: white, black, khaki (light brown), yellow, green, red and blue. Blue denotes carnal soul and represents end of periods (Ardalan, 2001). Similarly, Sultan Muhammad is not so devoted to this color composition in its mi'raj painting like his other works. In this painting, basically special and shining colors are used in the best manner and proportional and significant compositions are brought about by proper classification of color. This work is featured by a good color balance and color dominance is on indigo blue filling the painting background. Red,

vermilion and orange colors dispersed throughout the painting are the first colors in following background color which attract the attention. Green color is relatively predominant and is used abundantly, however since it is in lower degree of purity, it can be spotted less. However, greenness of Prophet Garment due to its concentration and golden flames surrounding it brings about visual emphasis more than its other family colors. Sultan Muhammad also has used decorations as usual appropriately. Angels' garments and Buraq's harnesses can be seen by ornamental designs. However, there is no design on Prophet's garment or its turban and headdress and they are quite plain, and maybe this measure was intentional with a special purpose. In this work, golden color plays a leading role. This color is used devotedly for fire flames and has no closeness feature and used as a color with highest emphasis and visual concentration and indeed it induces an unworldly sense. Maybe this sense implies that golden color denotes the apex of God splendid, beauty and greatness. In fact, meaning of using this color in this image is quite distinct from used themes and other works of Sultan Muhammad. Finally, at the end part some poems are written. These poems are titled as "Prophet Mi'raj" in which Nizami Ganjavi first praises God and Prophet, and then describes his Mi'raj.



Diagram 2: Line drawing of image

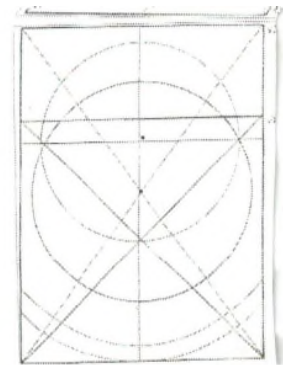


Diagram 1: Movement in the image



Diagram 4: Examining placing of golden pentagon of image

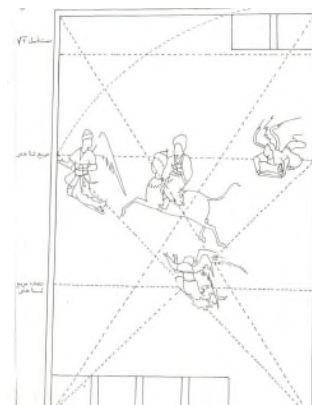


Diagram 3: Examining image proportions

Conclusion:

Findings of this paper can be summarized as follows:

- Modality of appearance and composition of visual elements and pictorial provisions used in Khamsa mi'raj image brings about a splendid and glorious scene that not only represents doctrinal and mystical depth of this event, but also unveils the artistic power in adopting visual and pictorial elements and by creating a mystical, mysterious and interpretative masterpiece makes the soul soaring and provide an interpretational space for viewer.
- In Khamsa mi'raj image, viewer can see an event by which his mind does not cease just as ascension movement of whole masterpiece and his attention would be drawn to beyond the image.
- Important feature of this masterpiece is illustrated narration of mi'raj event. Sultan Muhammad created its painting based on a literary script and illustrates a mystical and spiritual narration in a beautiful structure. All pictorial provisions are made for expressing and highlighting the spiritual position of Prophet and showing his heavenly ascension.
- Finally, occurrence and manifestation of spiritual and mystical narration of Khamsa should be considered as an element related to doctrinal and religious as well as artistic and supportive conditions of its era.

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