This painting from the history of the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar (the Akbarnama) depicts the first time he watched the capture of cheetahs, to be tamed and thereafter used in hunting. Abu'l Fazl, the author of the history, notes that the capture of cheetahs was the most remarkable of all the arts of the hunt in Hindustan: the animals had to be lured into specially dug pits in such a way that they were not injured.

The Akbarnama was commissioned by the emperor Akbar as the official chronicle of his reign. It was written by his court historian and biographer Abu'l Fazl between 1590 and 1596 and is thought to have been illustrated between c. 1592 and 1594 by at least forty-nine different artists from Akbar's studio. After Akbar's death in 1605, the manuscript remained in the library of his son, Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) and later Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658). The Victoria and Albert Museum purchased it in 1896 from the widow of Major General John Clarke, an official who had been the Commissioner in Oudh province between 1858 and 1862.

Historical significance: It is thought to be the first illustrated copy of the Akbarnama. It drew upon the expertise of some of the best royal painters of the time, many of whom receive special mention by Abu'l Fazl in the A'in-i-Akbari, the third volume of the Akbarnama. The inscriptions in red ink on the bottom of the paintings refer to the artists and indicate that this was a royal copy.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9248/akbar-assists-in-capturing-a-painting-tulsi/