

LUMINARIES, MYTH AND FANTASY
IN INDIAN AND PERSIAN PAINTING





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A LEAF FROM THE 'PALAM' BHAGAVATA PURANA

1. SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF KRISHNA

ATTRIBUTED TO PAINTER F
DELHI-AGRA REGION, CIRCA 1520-40

Opaque pigments on paper, upper border with a faded Devanagari inscription; verso with thirteen lines of black and some red Devanagari, with a narrow red margin ruled in black 6¼ by 9½ in.; 17.5 by 23.2 cm.

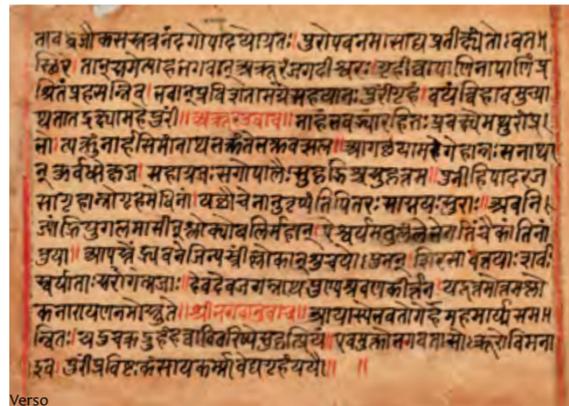
This famous manuscript is considered the earliest known illustrated copy of the *Bhagavata Purana*, comprising Book 10, which deals with episodes from the life of Krishna. Possibly consisting of 300 illustrated folios originally, only around 200 are thought to be extant. They are painted in the Chaurapanchasika style. Each is composed of two sheets of paper, illustrated on the recto and with Sanskrit inscriptions on the verso. Professor Daniel Ehnborn has identified ten artists, as artists A-J, who worked on this prestigious manuscript, see Ehnborn, pp.77-88.

EXPERT OPINION

We are grateful to Professor Daniel Ehnborn, who has made a study of this manuscript and inspected this leaf in the 1980s. He has provided the following description from his notes at the time:

[BP X.41.8-18]

Krishna tells Akrura that he will enter Mathura the next day and sends him to report their arrival to Kamsa. Attributed to Painter F. [Doris Wiener, New York] Nanda and his retinue, who have arrived earlier, sit with Krishna, Balarama, and Akrura on a checked carpet. The scene takes place in a park outside Mathura. An empty chariot stands to the left behind Krishna and his brother. The background is red. One of Nanda's bullock carts and a seated attendant in green are above left against a black ground. The fortified city of Mathura is to the right. Two seated women converse in an upper room within the city, no doubt discussing the impending arrival of the divine heroes. The Jamuna below is filled with aquatic plants and birds.



Verso

FOLIOS FROM THIS MANUSCRIPT IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Folios are represented in most important museum collections, notably:

- (i) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which has a number of leaves from this and two from the near-contemporary (1660-6) but smaller *Bhagavata Purana* found at Isarda, see Kossak, pp.27-31, nos.2-4 and 5-6.
- (ii) Four are in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, see Pal pp.143-145, nos. 36 A-D
- (iii) Five are in the British Museum, London
- (iv) Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge
- (v) Kronos Collection, New York, see McInerney, pp. 52-55, nos.1 & 2.

For a list of leaves in major institutions, see: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:%22Dispersed%22_Bhagavata_Purana_\(%22Sa_Mitharam_-_Sa_Nana%22_or_%22Palam%22_Bhagavata_Purana\)](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:%22Dispersed%22_Bhagavata_Purana_(%22Sa_Mitharam_-_Sa_Nana%22_or_%22Palam%22_Bhagavata_Purana))

For an example sold at Sotheby's, London, on 21 October 2021, lot 144, see: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/arts-of-the-islamic-world-india-including-fine-rugs-and-carpets-2/a-leaf-from-the-palam-bhagavata-purana-the?locale=en>

PROVENANCE

Doris Wiener, New York, 1970s-80s
Private collection, New York, 1980s
Private Foundation, New York, 2013-26

REFERENCES

Ehnborn, D., "The Masters of the Dispersed Bhagavata Purana" in Beach, M. et al., *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100-1650*, Zürich, 2011
Kossak, S., *Indian Court Painting 16th – 19th Century*, New York, 1997
McInerney, T., *Divine Pleasures: Painting from India's Rajput Courts: The Kronos Collection*, New York, 2016
Pal, P., *Indian Painting: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection*, vol. 1, Los Angeles, 1993



2. PORTRAIT OF THE CELEBRATED COURT MUSICIAN TANSEN (CIRCA 1493-1589) MUGHAL INDIA, CIRCA 1590

Opaque colours with gold on paper, laid down in an ivory-ground cropped album page decorated with gilt floral motifs, ink inscriptions in German on the verso; with a small associated label, in ink on *wasli* paper, inscribed with the name of Tansen in Devanagari and *nastal'iq*

6½ by 3 in.; 16.7 by 7.8 cm. painting

9½ by 6½ in.; 24.6 by 16.1 cm. folio

More than four late sixteenth century Mughal portraits of Tansen are known (see below) and in each the physiognomy of Tansen is distinct. The current, newly discovered, portrait confirms to this and leaves little or no doubt as to its identity, the associated inscription apart. As in the other portraits he is depicted standing on a green ground, in profile, his dark-skinned face with solemn expression, slender moustache and cleft chin. He wears the typical striped cotton Akbar-period flat turban secured with a gold brocade band, a gold ring in his left ear. He wears a diaphanous fine muslin *jama* on his upper body with an *odhni* over his chest, arms and shoulder whilst his lower body is enclosed in a voluminous *pajama* with diaphanous over-skirt and gold brocade *patka*. He wears a pair of gold shoes, two strings of pearls and holds a pearl rosary in his right hand behind which is a *katar* dagger.

TANSEN OF GWALIOR

Tansen Kalawant was born into a Hindu Gaur Brahmin family in Gwalior. His first patron is thought to have been the Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior after which, as an adult, he became court musician to Raja Ramchandra Singh Beghel (r.1555-92) of Rewa. His early influences were drawn from both the Muslim Sufi and Hindu traditions but the poet and court musician to Raja Man Singh Tomar, Swami Haridas, is thought to have been his main teacher.

Tansen was an accomplished composer, musician and vocalist and thus his fame spread. In the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl records that when the emperor heard of the talent of Tansen, who was then sixty, he was brought to the court in 1562 and became a favourite of the emperor. Akbar gave him the title of Mian, an honorific meaning learned man, and he also made him one of the Navaratnas, his nine main ministers or literally 'nine jewels'. Emperor Jahangir was also enthralled by the voice of Tansen and records in his memoirs that "there has been no singer like him in any time or age".

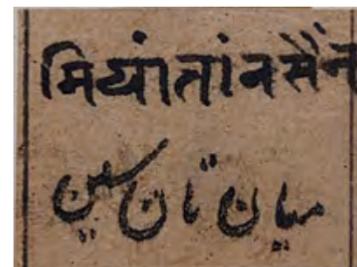
OTHER PORTRAITS OF TANSEN

- (i) Portrait of Tansen, standing in a white *jama*, with identifying inscription, circa 1580: Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk Virginia, (acc. no. 58.27.20), see Okada, p.22, no.20 and Brand & Lowry, p.150, no.55

- (ii) Portrait of Tansen, standing in a white *jama*, clapping his hands, circa 1585-90, National Museum, New Delhi
- (iii) Portrait of Tansen, standing in a white *jama*, with identifying inscriptions, circa 1580, CSMVS Museum (formerly Prince of Wales Museum), Mumbai
- (iv) Another version of the National Museum portrait, circa 1580, is in the Allahabad Museum, acquisition no. 1224: https://www.museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/alh_ald-AM-MIN-1224-4780
- (v) An eighteenth century painting depicting Akbar and Tansen visiting Swami Haridas in Vrindavan, each name labelled in Devanagari, Jaipur-Kishangarh style, circa 1750, acquisition no. 48.14/61: National Museum, New Delhi:
- (vi) A seventeenth century Mughal portrait of Tansen, formerly in the collection of Nasli Heeramanek (1902-71) and Claus Virch (1927-2012), sold at Sotheby's, New York, 17 March 2015, lot 1188; also published in Heeramanek, pp.159 & 209, no.184. Private collection, London.

INSCRIPTIONS

The associated paper fragment is inscribed in Devanagari and in *nastal'iq*:
'Mian Tan Sen'



PROVENANCE

Private collection, Germany, 1970s-2025
Deceased's estate 2025, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

REFERENCES

Brand, M. and Lowry, G.D., *Akbar's India: Art from the Mughal City of Victory*, New York, 1985
Heeramanek, A., *Masterpieces of Indian Painting formerly in the Nasli M. Heeramanek Collections*, Verona, 1984
Okada, A., *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court*, New York, 1992
Wade, B.C., *Imaging Sound: An Ethnomusicological study of Music, Art and Culture in Mughal India*, Chicago, 1998



3. PORTRAIT OF JAHANGIR (1569-1627) MUGHAL INDIA, CIRCA 1605-10

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with later *nastal'iq* inscription, lined
6 by 3½ in.; 15.5 by 8.5 cm.

The portrait is immediately recognisable as the young Jahangir and, as it lacks a halo, must have been intended to depict him when he was still Prince Salim, prior to his ascent of the *gaddi* in 1605. He was thirty-six years of age when he became emperor and the treatment of the face certainly suggests a man no older than this and possibly rather younger.

As he gazes intensely into the distance, his face bears the drooping moustache, double-curl sideburn, quizzical eyebrow and half beard common to the early portraits of the emperor. He stands in a terracotta landscape of hills lightly painted with flowers and, behind him, clumps of grass, with wisps of cloud and a retreating flock of birds in the evening sky beyond. In the foreground foliage of silver paint has oxidised. He wears fine muslin *jama* tied under his right arm with five lappets over a pair of orange *paijama*. His right hand is held forward in a welcoming gesture, his left holds the basket hilt of a straight sword, the guard with horse-head finial. His shoes, floral *patka* and brocade turban are embellished in gold, the former with a dagger tucked into it, the latter with plume and two pendant cords. He wears three necklaces, two of pearl and gems, the third bearing a pendant, as well as pearl bracelets, finger-rings and earrings.

SUBJECT

The reign of Jahangir (r.1605-27), the fourth Mughal emperor, was marked by consolidation of his empire and some of the greatest achievements in art and architecture. Like his father Akbar, he was a connoisseur with a strong intellectual curiosity, and this inspired the creation of superb palaces, mosques and tombs. At court he patronised some of the greatest painters, such as Mansur whose superb portraits of birds, animals and flowers remain unequalled. He also commissioned numerous portraits of himself by masters such as Bichitir and Govardhan.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Other early standing portraits of Jahangir:

- (i) Emperor Jahangir, attributed to Manohar, circa 1600-10, Brooklyn Museum of Art: Already with the familiar facial physiognomy of his middle years, though without a halo, see Poster, pp.81-83. <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/objects/115594>
- (ii) Sultan Salim with bow and arrow, probably from the Salim Album, circa 1603, Freer-Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C.: Here, nimbate and wearing a flat orange turban, drooping moustache and single-curl sideburn, he has already taken on the familiar physiognomy and gravitas that mark portraits throughout his reign, see Beach, p.102-3, no.19b.
- (iii) Emperor Jahangir, circa 1610, Victoria & Albert Museum, London: Almost a mirror image of this portrait, his right hand held forward, his left holding an elaborate sword. Both portraits have the distinctive half beard and double curl on

the sideburn and do not have a nimbus.

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O433966/the-emperor-jahangir-painting/>

- (iv) Two further portraits, circa 1611, from a Divan of Hafiz in the British Library, London: Jahangir playing polo and out hawking, see Losty & Roy, pp.106-7, figs.58 & 59.
- (v) Akbar presenting a falcon to Prince Salim, 1600-25; portrait of Safi Khan, dated 1618-19, Goenka Collection, Mumbai
In the first, Salim is shown in an Akbari style image; the second has many features in common with our portrait. See Goswamy & Bhatia, pp.53 & 61, nos.40 & 48.
- (vi) Jahangir as a young man, circa 1620, British Library, London
Here he appears fresh-faced, beardless and with the double curl sideburn, though without a nimbus, see Losty no.40.

INSCRIPTIONS

shabih-i jahangir badshah

'Likeness of Emperor Jahangir'

PROVENANCE

George Cumming (1752-1834), who served in the East India Company and was later M.P. for Inverness Burghs

Sir William Gordon-Cumming (1787-1854), 2nd Baronet of Altyre and Gordonstoun

Sir John Kennaway of Hyderabad (1758-1836), 1st Baronet, who had been British Resident at the Court of Nizam Ali Khan, Asaf Jah II, Nizam of Hyderabad (r.1762-1803)

By descent to Sir John Kennaway (1879-1956), 4th Baronet: Sotheby's London, 23 April 1956, lot 6* (*unillustrated*)

M. Gilbert Olivier (1914-1992), Paris

By descent to Mme. Jeanne Olivier, née Chapouilly (1914-2021), Paris

Private collection, Paris, by descent: Hôtel Drouot: Colin du Bocage, Paris, 9 October 2020, lot 18

* Designated as Sir John's property in the 1956 Sotheby's catalogue, where it is noted that the group of paintings being offered was "said to have been executed for the owner's great grandfather at Hyderabad in the late 18th Century". Only this painting and two others were described as seventeenth century, the description for this one stating that the then frame was inscribed "Sir Wm. Cumming Gordon from his affect. Uncle G.C."

REFERENCES

Beach, M.C., *The Imperial Image: Paintings from the Mughal Court*, Washington D.C., 2012

Falk, T. and Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London and New Delhi, London, 1981

Goswamy, B.N. and Bhatia, U., *Painted Visions: The Goenka Collection of Indian Paintings*, New Delhi, 1999

Losty, J.P., *Indian Book Painting*, London, 1986

Losty, J.P. and Roy, M., *Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire*, London, 2012

Poster, A., *Realms of Heroism: Indian Paintings at the Brooklyn Museum*, New York, 1994



AN UNUSUAL MUGHAL PAINTING FROM THE POZZI COLLECTION

4. TWO INFANT PRINCES SQUABBLING OVER A PET CAT MUGHAL INDIA, CIRCA 1650

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with white, black and gold rules and a rectangular inset of floral paper above and below, the uppermost with Persian inscription in black ink; laid down in a reduced album page with gilt foliage on a buff ground, verso lined, with a split Kalebdjian label
7½ by 5½ in.; 18.7 by 13.2 cm. painting
11 by 6½ in.; 28 by 16.8 cm. folio

The unique subject of this painting, which passed through the Paris collections of Pozzi and more recently the artist Le Tan, continues to fascinate. In a beautifully rendered landscape, with hills, mountains and a distant village below an evening sky, two infant boys vie for the attentions of a Persian long-haired piebald cat. Their guardian, perhaps a Sufi, a white-bearded elderly man in a grey robe and white turban sitting at the door of a woven grass hut, tries in vain to distract them with a red rattle held in his left hand. In the foreground are a startlingly white nilgai ewe and her young calf.

The two boys, possibly brothers or twins, seem to be in a tussle over the cat. The shaven-headed figure on the left, wearing a skull-cap, grasps the cat by tail and hind leg with some determination. The stout frizzy-haired boy on the right avoids his gaze and stares out at us, calmly stroking the cat and fondling it under the chin – it is plainly his cat. Each of the infants is dressed in a fine diaphanous white muslin tunic, the boy on the left wearing gold drop-earrings, bracelets, anklets and a hexagonal pendant. The boy on the right wears large pearl-drop earrings, bracelets and a cord girdle across his body strung with square and hexagonal gold talisman boxes, paired tiger-claws and a tawiz pendant.

The painting of children, other than those young princes included in formal gatherings or *darbars*, is rare in Mughal painting, an exception being those of the Virgin and Child. This painting, in depicting an informal scene of two infant boys squabbling over a pet cat, is most unusual. They are plainly high-born children, betrayed by their well-fed appearance, their gold jewellery, the finest muslin *jamās* and the fact that they are being painted in the first place. However, their identity remains a matter of speculation.

CHILD PORTRAITS IN MUGHAL ART

- (i) One of the most famous Mughal images of a child is the portrait of Shah Jahan enthroned with the five year-old Prince Dara Shikoh, by Nanha, circa 1620, in the Kevorkian Album at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, see Welch et al, pp.194-5, no.55.

Others include:

- (ii) Portrait of Shah Shuja (1616-61), attributed to Manohar, circa 1620, in the Art and History Collection, on loan to the National Museum of Asian Art, Washington D.C. Second son of Shah Jahan and much beloved of Jahangir, his grandfather, the boy wears a similar gold chain of protective amulets, see Robinson & Falk, p.212, no.111.
- (iii) Mughal drawing of a baby prince, circa 1670, in the British Library, London, (Falk & Archer, p.120 & 425, no.189,xlix) also wears this type of amulet chain, similarly strung from the left shoulder across the body.
- (iv) Mughal portrait of a child prince, 1600-25, in a private collection, see Pal, p.133, no.M.16.
- (v) A rare portrait of Akbar with his two young sons, circa 1575, was sold at Rosebery's, London, 14 June 2022, lot 159.

INSCRIPTIONS

Upper right margin with a fragment of Persian verse of a mystical philosophical nature, perhaps a catchword on the margin of a manuscript that has been incorporated into the border
sifatash ra zi suratast niqab
'The description of Him has a veil by way of form'

PROVENANCE

Kalebdjian Frères, Paris, before 1929
Jean Pozzi (1884-1967), France
Hôtel Drouot: Rheims & Laurin, Paris, 2 December 1970, lot 57
Hôtel Drouot: Laurin Guilloux Buffetaud, Paris, 1 July 1996, lot 12
Pierre Le-Tan (1950-2019), Paris, 1996-2017
With Alexis Renard, Paris
Private collection, Hong Kong, 2017-26

PUBLISHED

Bloch, E., *Musulman Painting; XII-XVII century*, London, 1929, pl. CXCVIII
Blochet, E., *Miniatures Persanes et Indopersanes de la Collection Jean Pozzi*, Paris, 1930, pl. XXXVIII, p.34, no. 20

REFERENCES

Falk, T. and Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981
Pal, P., *Court Paintings of India*, New York, 1983
Robinson, B.W. and Falk, T., *Persian and Mughal Art*, Colnaghi, London, 1976
Welch, S.C., Schimmel, A.M., Swietochowski, M.L. and Thackston, W.M., *The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India*, New York, 1987





**5. PORTRAIT OF SULTAN 'ALI ADIL SHAH II (1656-72)
BIJAPUR, DECCAN, INDIA, CIRCA 1660**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with unpainted plain border, laid down in a pale blue album page with gold, blue and red rules, verso with ink numbers, lined in card with cotton mesh covering
6 by 4 in.; 15 by 10.5cm. painting
14¾ by 10½ in.; 37.4 by 26.7cm. folio

SUBJECT

The eighth and penultimate sultan of Bijapur, 'Ali Adil Shah ruled from 1656-72, during a fractious period when his kingdom was threatened from all sides. In the west the increasingly powerful Marathas led by Shivaji were about to act, in the south the Nayaks were activated to recover previously lost territory and the Mughals invaded on the false pretext that the sultan's lineage was questioned. He repelled these would-be usurpers during his sixteen-year reign but, following his death, the kingdom succumbed and by the end of the century Deccan painting was in terminal decline. In spite of this, the paintings of this period show a remarkable flowering of the Bijapur style and convey a sense of timeless calm in works that display before us a court life of considerable languor.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Several of the surviving portraits of 'Ali Adil Shah, have been attributed to a painter given the sobriquet "Bombay" painter by the late Mark Zebrowski, now identified as Abdul Hamid Naqqash. While this portrait has several of the stylistic traits found in these works, not least the style of the face as well as the textiles such as the swagged curtain, it has not been attributed to him. The known "Bombay" painter portraits are:

- (i) 'Ali Adil Shah II slays a tiger, circa 1660, formerly in the Hodgkin Collection and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, see Haidar and Sardar, pp. 148-9, nos. 66 & 67.
- (ii) Sultan 'Ali Adil Shah II with courtiers, circa 1660, in the David Collection, Copenhagen, see Zebrowski, pp.139-40, no.107 and Haidar & Sardar, no.67:
- (iii) Window portrait of Sultan 'Ali Adil Shah II inspecting a ruby or spinel, circa 1660, Barber Institute, Birmingham, U.K., see Zebrowski, p.141, no.108
- (iv) 'Ali Adil Shah standing, circa 1660, Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, see Seyller, pp.74-5, no.16
- (v) 'Ali Adil Shah smoking a huqqa, 1660-70, British Library, London, see Falk & Archer, pp.224 & 503, no.411

PROVENANCE

Toby Falk (1942-97), Surrey: Christie's, London, 27 October 2023, lot 58

REFERENCES

- Falk, T. and Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981
- Haidar, N.N. and Sardar, M., *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500-1700: Opulence and Fantasy*, New York, 2015
- Seyller, J., *Deccani Paintings, Drawings and Manuscripts in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art*, vol.1, Hyderabad, 2018
- Zebrowski, M., *Deccani Painting*, London, 1983

6. **MALE WESTERN TRAGOPAN (*Tragopan melanocephalus*)**
MUGHAL INDIA, CIRCA 1660

Opaque pigment with gold on paper, a faded Persian inscription in the foreground commencing 'amal'i, laid down in a cropped album page with gold arcs of foliage on a rust ground, with gold-splashed margins ruled in gold and black
4½ by 3½ in.; 11.8 by 9.7 cm. painting
12½ by 8 in.; 32.1 by 20.6 cm. folio

This splendid bird stands on a plain ground, the upper body with touches of orange contrasting with speckled feathers covering the wings and lower body. The tragopan has long been considered a rare species in India and was one of the birds painted by one of the greatest of all Indian artists, Mansur.

We are grateful to the ornithologist Katrina von Grouw for the following note on the tragopan.

This is the darkest of the five tragopan species, with orange only on the head, nape and upper breast, but it is arguably the most strikingly handsome. The orange is intense, and the white spots against the dark background of the body and wings stand out, creating a strong visual effect in this fine portrait.

The bare skin of the throat, too, is brightly coloured, though only when unfurled and inflated with air during courtship displays. It transforms into a decorative pendulous 'bib' with a vertical stripe of deep indigo in the centre, on a serrated leaf shape of pale blue, set off against a background of vivid pink. This is when the bird's 'horns' are revealed, two erect finger-like spikes of pale blue skin on top of the head, reminiscent of the Greek god Pan. It is allegedly these which have given the tragopans their name by adding the prefix: *tragos* meaning 'goat' in Greek to the word Pan.

Tragopans belong to the *phasianidae* – the pheasant family - but are more closely related to the partridges, monals, and grouse than they are to true pheasants. However, they are unusual for nesting high in trees and not on the ground. Western Tragopans

are birds of the temperate forests of the western Himalayan foothills and are known from only a few scattered localities in India and Pakistan. They are the rarest of the tragopans and one of the rarest pheasants in the world, with a global population estimated at fewer than five thousand. They rely on undisturbed areas with dense understorey on forested mountain slopes and are, consequently, very difficult to observe in the wild. Dedicated conservation efforts are attempting to halt the decline of these enigmatic birds.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

The male tragopan appears with the dodo in a painting, circa 1625, in the Institute for Eastern Studies, Saint Petersburg. Lady Impey also commissioned Shaykh Zayn al-Din to paint the satyr tragopan in 1777, see Falk & Hayter, and another, by Ram Das, from the collection of Anthony Hobson, was sold at Christie's, 10 June 2015, lot 61.

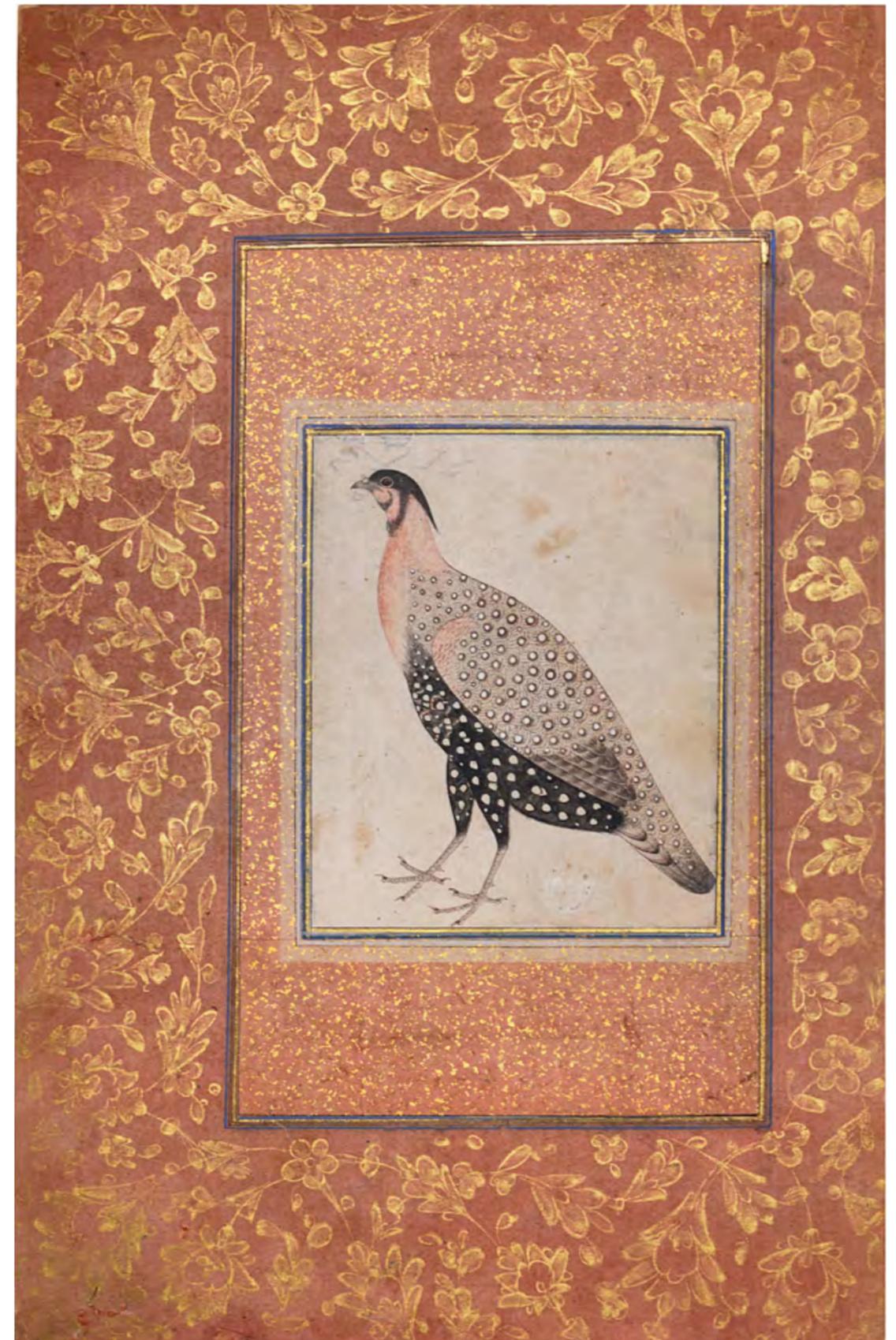
A third painting from the Impey album, of a male satyr tragopan, also by Ram Das, was sold at Christie's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 51. An early seventeenth century Mughal painting of two pheasants, one of which is in fact a tragopan, is in the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., see: https://asia.si.edu/explore-art-culture/collections/search/edanmdm:fsg_51986.411/

PROVENANCE

Colnaghi, London, 29 August 1980
Geoffrey M. (1939-2009) and Carol D. Chinn, (1940-2023), New York, 1980-2024: Sotheby's, London, 24 April 2024, lot 109

REFERENCES

Falk, T. and Hayter, G., *Birds in an Indian Garden*, exhibition catalogue, London, 1984



A DECCAN PORTRAIT OF IBRAHIM ADIL SHAH FROM THE POZZI COLLECTION

7. PORTRAIT OF IBRAHIM ADIL SHAH (1570-1627) DECCAN, CIRCA 1670

Opaque pigments with gold on paper
8⅜ by 4¼ in.; 21.8 by 10.9 cm.

The nimbate prince stands on a green ground, gazing to the left at a floral sprig held in his right hand, his left touching a fold of the dark shawl draped across his arm and lower body. Wearing *pajamas* under a gold-bordered diaphanous muslin pleated *jama*, his distinctive domed turban and red shoes. He wears long strings of pearls and a gold belt, bracelets and pendant.

SUBJECT

A tolerant and enlightened ruler, Ibrahim Adil Shah saw the flowering of Deccan culture at its most refined during his long reign from 1580-1627. A physically imposing prince with a refined and cosmopolitan mind, he was a brilliant military strategist, extending the borders of his kingdom southward. As an artist and poet himself, his passion for the arts saw not only a flourishing school of painting but the building of the magnificent city of Bijapur. He reverted to the Sunni orthodoxy of Islam but was a pluralist in outlook.

IBRAHIM ADIL SHAH

Sixth ruler of the Adil Shahi dynasty, Ibrahim 'Adil Shah was by all means an enlightenment figure, considered to be the greatest patron the Deccan has produced. His appetite for painting, music and poetry was insatiable. According to Zebrowski, he "caused sweeping changes to occur ... when he assumed full power at the age of twenty... Bijapuri painting suddenly erupted, brilliantly mature..." (Zebrowski, p.67).

A painter, calligrapher, poet and musician, Ibrahim was the ultimate product of the hybrid culture of the Deccan. A pluralist, he had a great interest and appreciation of Hinduism and had "an aesthete's attachment to the beauty of both [Hindu and Muslim] civilisations" (Zebrowski, p.73).

With the fall of Ahmadnagar fort to the Mughals in 1600, both Bijapur and Golconda realised the need to placate Akbar, and Ibrahim reluctantly agreed to give his daughter in marriage to Akbar's son Daniyal. As a result, exchanges began between the Bijapur and Mughal courts and, as well as a favourite elephant, Ibrahim sent two thousand manuscripts from the royal library (Zebrowski, pp.67-8). Under Ibrahim's successors, painting

continued to flourish, but by the end of the century it was in serious decline as Mughal hegemony increased.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Of the surviving portraits, this bears comparison with the figure of Ibrahim seated on an elephant in procession, circa 1650, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with similar turban and clothing. It is also close in style to another portrait, circa 1675, in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

- (i) Bust portrait of Ibrahim aged 19, Bikaner painter, circa 1590, David Collection, Copenhagen: <https://legacy.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/miniatures/art/105-2007>
Standing figure of Ibrahim holding castanets, by the Bodleian painter, circa 1610-20: British Museum, London, see Haidar & Sardar, pp.112-3, no.39
- (ii) Standing figure of Ibrahim holding castanets, by the Bodleian painter, circa 1610-20: British Museum, London, see Haidar & Sardar, pp.112-3, no.39
- (iii) Standing figure of Ibrahim in a garden with attendants, second half 17th century, private collection, England, see Zebrowski, p.91, no.67
- (iv) Standing portrait in billowing scarf, 1625-50, Goenka Collection, Mumbai, see Goswamy & Bhatia, p.94, no.72
- (v) Standing portrait, holding a staff and a posy, circa 1675, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, see Pal, pp.330-1, no.101

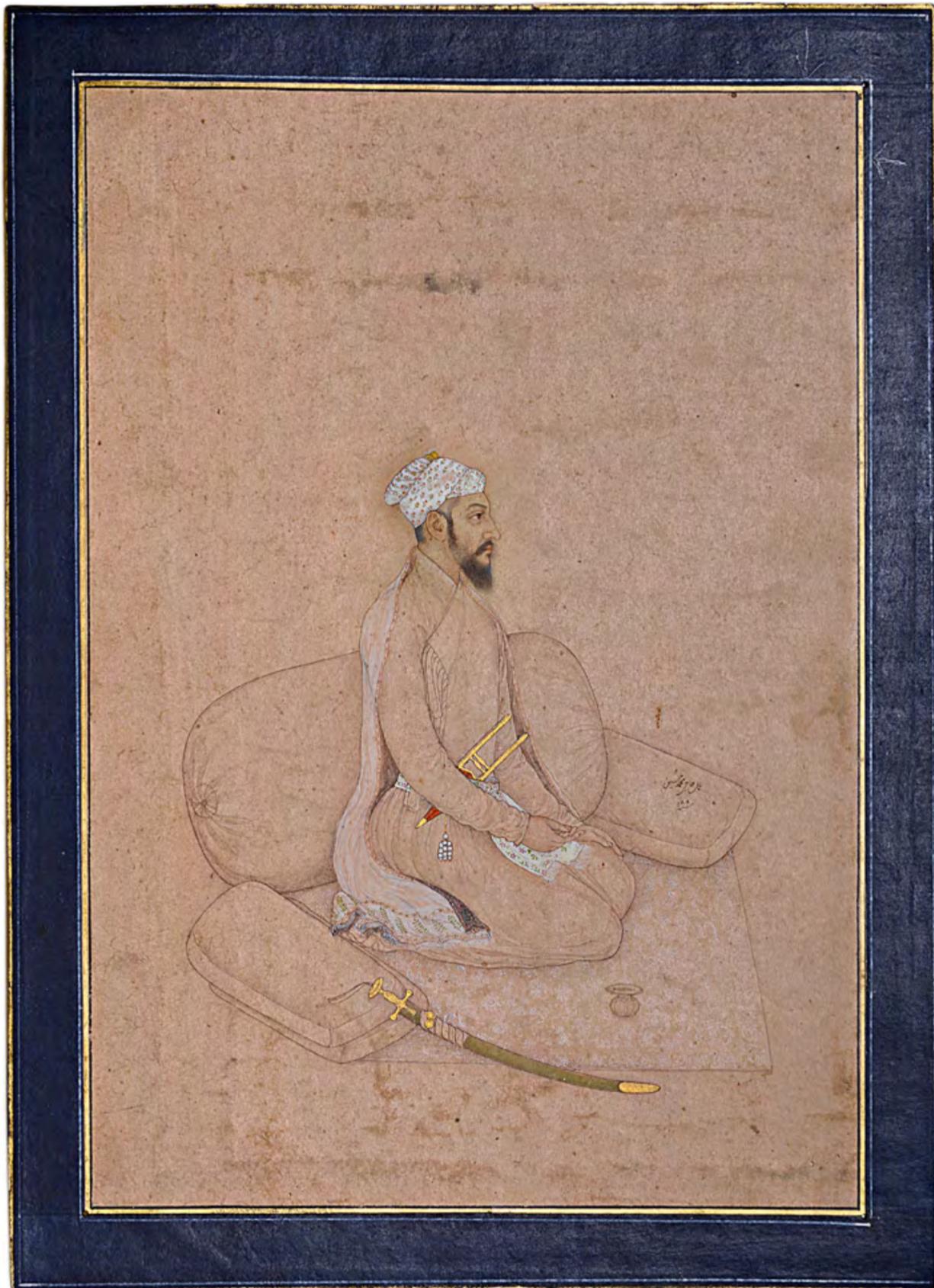
PROVENANCE

Jean Pozzi (1884-1967), France
Palais Galliera: Maîtres Rheims et Laurin, Paris, *Succession de M. Jean Pozzi: Miniatures indiennes et orientales*, 5 December 1970, lot 39
Private collection, France, 1970-2025

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Pal, P., *Indian Painting: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection*, Los Angeles, 1993
Zebrowski, M., *Deccani Painting*, London, 1983





8. PORTRAIT OF A NOBLE

BY HAJI MOHAMMED HUSAYN
MUGHAL INDIA, DATED A.H. 1[0]88 / 1677-78 A.D.

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, dark blue border ruled in white and gold
7½ by 5½ in.; 19.8 by 14 cm. painting
9 by 6½ in.; 23 by 17 cm. folio

An exceptionally fine *nim qalam* drawing, to which the only colours are white with minute touches of red and green. A nobleman kneels on a small carpet embroidered with white flowers, his hands on his knees, a large bolster behind him, two smaller ones to his right, a third bears the identifying inscription. In front of him lies his sword and a small spittoon. He wears a *jama* tied on his right, a lined white shawl with fern motif border draped over his shoulders, and a short white embroidered *patka*, into which a *katar* dagger is tucked, suspended with a pearl *turra*. His bearded head has a classical profile, wears a solemn expression and stares straight ahead, his white turban is decorated with minute *chitta* motifs.

This strikingly intense portrait captures a moment of serious contemplation, but his identity remains anonymous. His fine, if subdued, dress and deportment augment his noble features and if, as has been suggested, he may be one of the emperor's close courtiers, the sombreness of his expression might suggest he is weighing up the problems of state.

REIGN OF EMPEROR AURANGZEB

Aurangzeb came to power having had his father, Shah Jahan, imprisoned in the fort at Agra and, in the resulting war of succession, had two of his brothers put to death. Having seized the throne, he reigned for forty-nine years (1658-1707), during which the empire expanded to its greatest size, the emperor being utterly ruthless and highly experienced in battle strategy. With his pious character and unrelenting military campaigns,

his reign is not known for its patronage of art or architecture. Nevertheless, the idiom set by his father and grandfather continued to produce portraits and drawings of the emperor and his courtiers.

THE ARTIST

According to Seyller (pp.65-66) three other works by Haji Muhammad Husayn are known, comprising a standing princess bearing the same date, in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, two nobles in a private collection, New York and an oval bust portrait of a lady, formerly in the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Collection, Mumbai. Seyller attributes a portrait of Prince Mu'azzam, Aurangzeb's second son and successor, in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, (Pal, no.81) to Husayn and suggests he became the artist's patron.

INSCRIPTIONS

A signature in Persian:

'amal-i haji muhammad husayn sana 1[0]88

'The work of Haji Muhammad Husayn. The year 1[0]88' [1677-8 A.D.]

PROVENANCE

Konrad Seitz (1934-2023), Cologne

With Sam Fogg, London, 2011

Private collection, UK 2011-2025

PUBLISHED

Seyller, J., *Mughal and Deccani Paintings*, Zürich, 2010, no. 15, p.65-66

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9. **COURT LADY WITH OFFERINGS, PERHAPS ABHISARIKA NAYIKA
DECCAN, LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with gold, black and blue rules and a foliate margin on blue, laid down in a buff-coloured album page with repeating gold cypress trees, a seal impression on the verso

5 by 3 in.; 13 by 7.5 cm. painting
13 by 8½ in.; 33.1 by 22.4 cm. folio

In this charming scene, a princess stands with her pet nilgai holding a tray of offerings, a young female attendant in court dress behind her holds a peacock *morchal* and a bunch of grapes. Set in a green landscape, a delicately flowering tree arcs above the lady, in which two red lovebirds are perched, which may suggest that the young lady is approaching her beloved.

The young lady is richly dressed in gold shoes, pyjama, *patka*, diaphanous overskirt and *orhni* draped about her head and shoulders. She is pale-skinned with long black hair tumbling down her back. Her clothing is of the finest silk and muslin, the former decorated with flowering plants, the latter gold-edged. Her jewellery includes a three-strand pearl choker, gold necklaces and a hair ornament, bracelets and earrings. She holds a circular gold tray with a cup and a gem-set gold wine flask, her eye fixed on the invisible recipient straight ahead. Her attendant is in similar attire and her wearing of pearls suggests she too is of noble descent. The nilgai is in stride, his left foreleg raised, and the tips of his horns are gilded.

This painting captures a moment in time, perhaps a romantic assignation. Despite both her attendant and the nilgai being in step, the young girl appears to have stopped in her tracks, perhaps on first glimpse of her beloved.

SUBJECT

It may be that the subject was intended to be a *nayika*, from a *Ashta-Nayika* series. This is an ancient Indian collective name for the eight types of *nayika*, or heroine. The eight states (*avastha*) represent the emotional stages of the heroine's relationship with her hero (*nayaka*). The subject of this painting may therefore be

Abhisarika *Nayika*, where the *nayika* is going to meet her *nayaka*, hence her impeccable appearance and the tray of refreshments she is carrying. Such depictions do not usually include a lady's maid but here, in a very Deccani flourish, the similarly dressed lady-in-waiting is clearly of high birth. She carries a bunch of black grapes and a peacock fan (*morchal*), the latter usually reserved for royalty.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

The female figure is somewhat reminiscent of those found in late seventeenth century paintings in the style of Rahim Deccani. These figures stand under a flowering tree in a landscape beside a nilgai, wearing pointed shoes, and *pajamas* with flaring *patka* under a diaphanous muslin overskirt. For an example in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, see Haidar, p.249, no.143.

For a related woman standing cross-legged with hand reaching into a flowering tree, Mughal-Deccani style, circa 1670, in the Rietberg Museum, Zürich, see Seyller, p.72, no.9. A contemporaneous Deccan painting with similar female figures is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (PD 190-1948).

INSCRIPTIONS

An ink seal on the verso reads:
mihri kutubkhana-i razi al-din khush ast 1300
'The seal of Razi al-Din's library is beautiful. 1300' [1882-3 A.D.]

PROVENANCE

Acquired at auction in London in the 1970s
Private collection, London, 1970s-2024

REFERENCES

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10. **EQUESTRIAN PORTRAIT OF BAHADUR SHAH ALAMGIR (1643-1712)**
MUGHAL INDIA, CIRCA 1700

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with red and white rules and a red margin, laid down in a reduced album page; a panel of calligraphy on the verso
 10¼ by 7½ in.; 26 by 18.7 cm. painting
 12½ by 8¾ in.; 32.5 by 22.2 cm. folio

In a green landscape under a polychrome sky, the emperor sits upright on a fine bay stallion flanked by two courtiers brandishing peacock *morchals*. He is depicted nimbate, with an appropriate grey beard as he was sixty-four when he ascended the throne. Dressed in elaborate court costume comprising a plumed, gem-set turban, long green *jama* and purple over-coat of gold brocade, he holds the reins in one hand and a spear in the other. His steed has braided mane, henna'd forelocks and wears a gold saddle-cloth embroidered with flowers.

SUBJECT

The second son of Emperor Aurangzeb, Shah Alam I, became the eighth Mughal Emperor, known as or Bahadur Shah I and ruled from 1707-12. Having rebelled against his father, in 1670 and again ten years later, his relationship deteriorated further when he was less than competent in various provincial governorships. This culminated in what was considered treason during a Deccan campaign in 1687 and led his father to imprison him and his two sons.

Following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the emperor's failure to designate an heir led to a fractious and disastrous period as all three sons sought to claim the throne. With the defeat and death of one brother, Azam Shah, at the battle of Jajau in 1707, Bahadur Shah I ascended the throne. Plunged into battles in an effort to annex the major Rajput kingdoms, as well as rebelling the Sikhs in Punjab, the following year he killed his remaining brother Kam Bakhsh in a battle near Hyderabad. Bahadur Shah I died at Lahore in 1712 and was succeeded by his son, Jahandar Shah, who became, briefly, the ninth Mughal emperor.

Another equestrian portrait of Bahadur Shah I, ascribed to Hunhar, circa 1690, is in the British Library, London, see Falk & Archer, p.416, no.133

INSCRIPTIONS

On the border, an identification in Persian:
 'Bahadur Shah'

On the verso, a Persian quatrain in praise of an emperor (*shahanshah*). The poem contains a date in the form of an *abjad* chronogram as well as in numerals A.H. 1137 / 1724-5 A.D. Signed on the lower right margin:
khana-zad rai jugal kishor
 'The one born to the house (*khana-zad*), Rai Jugal Kishore'

There was a Jugal Kishore who is recorded at court in Delhi as early as 1721. On his father's death in 1739, he took over the latter's role as agent of the Nawab of Bengal in Delhi (Kaicker, p.25). It is possible that Jugal Kishore was both the poet and the calligrapher.

PROVENANCE

Peter Dineley (1939-2018), London and the West Country:
 Bonhams, London, 2 April 2009, lot 138
 Private collection, Germany, 2009-26

REFERENCES

Falk, T. and Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981
 Kaicker, A., *The King and the People: Sovereignty and Popular Politics in Mughal Delhi*, Oxford, 2020



13. detail



14. detail

FOUR EXCEPTIONALLY FINE LARGE-SCALE PAINTINGS FROM THE MEWAR COURT UDAIPUR, RAJASTHAN, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In London, between the 1970s and 90s, a series of large-scale eighteenth century paintings from the Mewar Court at Udaipur appeared on the market. Collectors, curators and dealers had never, for the most part, seen their like outside museum collections and they were eagerly absorbed into public and private collections on both sides of the Atlantic.

Centuries of court painting at Udaipur were not exposed to Western, or indeed non-royal, eyes until the appointment of James Tod (1782-1835), the first political agent at the Mewar Court (1818-22) and author of *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, in 1829 and 1832. However, it is only in the last forty years that the subject has been researched, in considerable depth, by Andrew Topsfield, whose books and articles have established a documented chronology of the generations of painters patronised by successive Maharanas of Mewar. This has recently been augmented by a landmark loan exhibition held at the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. in 2023.

The main collections with paintings on this scale comprise the extensive royal collection, housed in the City Palace Museum in Udaipur, (Topsfield, 1990), the Felton Bequest in the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, (Topsfield, 1980), and a third group assembled by the British Rail Pension Fund in the 1970s and dispersed at auction in London in the 1990s (Sotheby's, 1994 & 1996). Four of the latter were offered for sale in 2010, in New York, by Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch Ltd. (Losty, 2010).

Fifteen years on we are delighted to offer a further four exceptional paintings to a new audience of buyers.

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edited by J. Guy, Ahmedabad, 1995, pp.188-99

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Sotheby's, *Indian Miniatures: the Property of the British Rail Pension Fund*, London, 26 April 1994

Sotheby's, *Persian and Indian Manuscripts and Miniatures from the Collection formed by the British Rail Pension Fund*, London, 23 April 1996

11. **MAHARANA SANGRAM SINGH (1690-1734) WATCHING A TAMASHA IN THE AMAR VILAS (BARI MAHAL) OF THE UDAIPUR PALACE**
MEWAR, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1720

Opaque watercolour with gold on paper, the broad red border double ruled in black, one and a half lines of black Devanagari and an inventory number on the reverse
15¾ by 8¾ in.; 40 by 22 cm. painting
18¾ by 11¼ in.; 48 by 29.8 cm. folio

In one of the more vertiginous upper chambers of the white marble and sandstone royal palace at Udaipur, Maharana Sangram Singh (b.1690; r.1710-34) and a companion watch the proceedings in a courtyard below. The palace pavilion is composed of a series of colonnaded *chhatris* relieved with rows of *jali* screens and blind arches surrounding a verdant garden. The artist has created a brilliant effect by restricting colour, other than the two figures, to the green trees in the garden, the surrounding white architecture and the red ground of the open corridors of the palace. The maharana himself is illuminated by a gold halo and, accompanied by a nobleman, awaits proceedings



from the loftiness of the Amar Vilas (or Bari Mahal), the garden within built by his father, Amar Singh, in 1703.

In the courtyard beside four erupting gilt fireworks a dance troupe provides an entertainment, each of the four male figures dancing and dressed in a gilt turban and a brocade coat, two playing a tambourine and a horn. Six courtiers are lined up on the left and four on the right. In the foreground stands a tethered elephant and its keeper, in front of which stand two attendants, holding sparkler and smoking torch, with which they prevent the animal drinking, so as to pay obeisance to the maharana.

MAHARANA SANGRAM SINGH

Sangram Singh (r.1710-34) was an astute ruler who diffracted invasion from both the Mughals and the Marathas and steered his kingdom into solvency. He regained territory that had been lost and his sons continued to expand the territory of his kingdom. In his near quarter of a century rule he set his artists an exacting task: "... to build up a comprehensive documentary record of state occasions and seasonal festivals, as well as the daily activities and pastimes of the Rana in his ancestral domain." (Topsfield, 2002, pp.158-9). It would seem he had considerable success in doing so, judging from the number of surviving large-scale pictures, though many, like this painting, are not necessarily signed by an artist. These paintings are now scattered between the City Palace Museum, Udaipur, the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and various international museums and private collections. See Topsfield (1990), pp.21-37, nos.1-7; Topsfield (1980), pp.67-84, nos.67-88; Topsfield (2002), pp.148-173; and Diamond & Khera, pp.182-88 and 196-201, no.38, 39 and 43.

INSCRIPTIONS

No artist's name is recorded but the central figure in the balcony is identified as Maharana Sangram Singh. The smudged inventory number may read 2/59.

PROVENANCE

Spink & Son, London, 1998
Private collection, Switzerland, 1998-2026

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Topsfield, A., *Court Painting at Udaipur*, Zürich, 2002





AN EXCEPTIONALLY LARGE PROCESSIONAL SCENE FORMERLY IN THE COLLECTION OF THE BRITISH RAIL PENSION FUND

12. MAHARANA JAGAT SINGH II (1709-51) RIDING THE ELEPHANT SHYAM SUNDAR IN A WEDDING PROCESSION TO THE KISHAN VILAS GARDEN MEWAR, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1740

Opaque watercolour on paper, red border ruled in black, the reverse with gauze reinforcement, inscribed with a block of ten and a quarter lines of black Devanagari, a single line below, and an inventory number
 18 3/8 by 33 3/8 in.; 47.2 by 85.5 cm. painting
 20 1/2 by 33 3/8 in.; 52 by 90 cm. folio

In this extremely large and grand procession, to celebrate the wedding of Thakur Sirdar Singh, the nimbate Maharana is placed at the centre, riding an elephant in the place of the *mahout*, *ankus* in one hand, the stem of a *huqqa* in the other, while an attendant behind fans him with a *chauri*. Behind him the bridegroom rides a white stallion.

No other Rajput school of painting could rival the eighteenth century Mewar artists for their skill in depicting royal ceremonial processions, both in terms of scale and detail. Here we have a rare example of an ambitiously large, ceremonial marriage procession showing the Maharana in dazzling gold-embellished garb with his precisely regimented court all about him. Mewar princes were inordinately fond of their elephants and it is significant that here the name Shyam Sundar is recorded, plainly a favourite of Jagat Singh.

Below the royal party stand Govardhan, the *huqqa-buridar* and Baba Bharat Singh, the *chauri*-bearer, both named, while behind him two bearers hold the royal parasol and a fan. He is preceded by two princes on horseback and five princely elephants head the procession. Below the Maharana is a further prince on horseback while in front and behind are large crowds of courtiers, a band of musicians and, to the left, groups of standing women, some singing wedding songs. Leading up the rear are fourteen princes and attendants on horseback, a figure on a camel and two further elephants ridden by kettle-drummers. The nobles' *jamas* are tinted with saffron, an auspicious colour.

JAGAT SINGH II (r.1734-51)
 "Addicted to pleasure, his habits of levity and profusion totally unfitted him for the task of governing..." (James Tod (1782-1835) quoted in Topsfield (2002), p.179). Despite this, his reign saw a

flowering of the arts, as the Maharana distracted himself from the ominous events of state with an endless series of festivals, processions and other seasonal ceremonies. As well as numerous new architectural projects, not least the famous pleasure palace of Jagniwās on Lake Pichola, his reign saw increased patronage and secularising of painting as each season's festivities were documented by his teams of artists.

Apart from these subjects and, of course, numerous portraits of himself and, sometimes, of his courtiers, Jagat Singh's two other major genres were the traditional Rajput themes of elephant and hunting scenes.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

A comparable procession of Jagat Singh, dated 1743, is in the City Palace Museum, Udaipur, see Topsfield (1990), no.10. For further examples and a detailed account of painting under Jagat Singh II, see Topsfield (2002), pp.179-195.

INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions reveal that this grand procession is to celebrate the wedding of the figure on horseback, behind the Maharana's elephant, who is Thakur Sirdar Singh. Other named figures on horseback are Maharaja Takhat Singh, Maharaja Nathji, Maharaja Bakhat Singh, Ravat Kesri Singh, Raja Raghodev, Dhabhai Manji and the attendants Tulsidas and Lal.

We are grateful to Dr. Andrew Topsfield for his assistance in translating the inscriptions

PROVENANCE

Art Market, London, before 1978
 British Rail Pension Fund: Sotheby's London, 26 April 1994, lot 37
 Private collection, England, 1994-2026

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A FINE MEWAR PALACE SCENE BY RADHUNATH DATED 1754

13. MAHARANA RAJ SINGH II (1743-61) LISTENING TO MUSIC WITH COURTIERS
IN THE GREATER CHINESE PICTURE HALL

BY RADHUNATH, SON OF MALUK CHAND
MEWAR, RAJASTHAN, DATED V.S. 1811 / 1754 A.D.

Opaque pigments on paper, red border ruled in black, seven lines
of Devanagari on the reverse
16½ by 12½ in.; 41.8 by 31.8 cm. painting
19½ by 15½ in.; 49.5 by 39.3 cm. folio

This large highly skilled work, painted in the inaugural year of Raj Singh's reign, shows an aesthetic refinement in its interesting layout and predominantly white, red and blue palette. The extraordinary and unique *Chini ki Chitrasali* courtyard, with its elegant arcaded colonnade, was completed in 1723 and is still extant within the City Palace complex at Udaipur. Here the young Rana, nimbate, enthroned and surrounded by older advisers, is receiving perhaps one of the first audiences of his reign. In front of him on a magnificent maroon-ground floral carpet, two female singers and a drummer perform and his sword-bearer stands on the right.

The Rana is flanked by five seated and three standing courtiers, all engaging with the music provided by a *tambur*-player with two ladies singing. The nimbate Maharana wears a plumed turban, gold brocade dhoti and ropes of pearls over a diaphanous *jama*, his sword and shield in front of him. The scene is contained by a further arcade of geometric *jali* screens, below which is a courtier standing between two columns where four servants wait in an open chamber with a bed and coloured glass windows, a sun emblem beyond.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

The *Chini ki Chitrasali* courtyard was completed in 1723 and it appears in another Mewar painting by Bakhta, 1765, in the Felton Bequest collection at the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, see Topsfield 1980, p.118, no.167, pl.14. Its appearance is unchanged eleven years later, down to the solar disc in the wall of the lower chamber, which Topsfield informs us, (via Tod, the historian and sometime political agent at Udaipur), was called, after the Hindu sun-god, the Surya Mahal.

MAHARANA RAJ SINGH (r.1754-61)

Despite a short rule of only seven years, Raj Singh seems to have been an active patron of painting, particularly during the first three years of his reign. Apart from Radhunath, son of Maluk Chand, other named artists in his employ include Bagta and Naga, see Topsfield (2002), pp. 194-8.

INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions include the name of the artist, Raghunath, son of Maluk Chand and the date VA 1811 *kati sudi* 5 (1754 A.D.).

PROVENANCE

Spink & Son, London, 1999
Private collection, Switzerland, 1999-2026

EXHIBITED

The Eye of the Courtier, Spink & Son, London, 1999, no.57

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**A LARGE MEWAR PROCESSIONAL SCENE
BY JIVA DATED 1761**

**14. MAHARANA ARI SINGH II IN PROCESSION
AT THE DASSEHRA FESTIVAL AND
ATTENDING THE KHEJARI PUJA**

**BY JIVA
MEWAR, RAJASTHAN, DATED 1761**

Opaque watercolour on paper, black rules with red border,
inscribed on the reverse in Devanagari with the artist's name and
date

23¼ by 18¾ in.; 59 by 47 cm. painting

25½ by 19½ in.; 63.8 by 50 cm. folio

In a fine and extraordinarily ambitious work, the master artist Jiva has created a tripartite painting to depict, simultaneously, three separate ceremonial events in the life of Ari Singh II. Known for his skill in creating highly imaginative visual solutions to, for example, such quotidian subjects as a tiger-hunt, the bird's eye view he takes in "Maharana Jagat Singh II shooting tiger by the lake", dated 1749, in the San Diego Museum of Art, (Topsfield (2002), p.192, no.172), is indeed novel and creates a mesmerising effect. Here too the profusion of figures, animals and activities created to convey the narrative is visually arresting.

The lower half of the painting observes the conventions of the Mewar processional style: the Rana riding predominant with his retinues, standard-bearers proceeding in front of him. The red-tented enclosure at upper right depicts the ceremonial worship of the *khejari* tree (seen just beyond the enclosure) by the Rana, who is seated with his chief nobles, known as the Khejari Puja. The tree, *prosopis cineraria*, is culturally important in Rajasthan. On the left, in the Chaugan (the former royal polo ground), diminutive multitudes surround elephant fights while others sacrifice buffalo as part of the Dassehra festivities.

Topsfield (2002, p.200, no.181) writes of this painting: "A dramatically crowded, composite subject by the long established artist Jiva in 1761 shows Ari Singh parading in procession, while the annual Dassehra celebrations at the Chaugan and the Khejari Puja are compressed into the crowded background."

THE SUBJECT

Maharana Ari Singh (r.1761-73) ascended the Mewar throne upon the death of his nephew, Raj Singh (r.1754-61). He was not a popular ruler, alienating the sardars and earning a reputation for oppressiveness. However, painting flourished during his reign though mainly prior to 1767 when political disruption eventually led to his assassination, by a Bundi prince, while out hunting.

THE ARTIST JIVA

One of the most accomplished eighteenth century artists at the Mewar court, he painted many large-scale works, often evocative hunting scenes or complex compositions celebrating weddings or festivals. His handling of light and space and treatment of landscape is remarkable. Jiva's work dates to as early as 1749

under Jagat Singh II (r.1734-51) and continued during the brief reigns of Raj Singh II (r.1754-61) and then Ari Singh II (r.1761-73).

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

For other works by Jiva, see:

- (i) Maharana Jagat Singh hunting tiger, by Jiva, 1749
San Diego Museum of Art, Binney Collection, California, see Diamond & Khera, pp.58-9, no.6
- (ii) Maharana Jagat Singh in a palace garden, circa 1750, by Jiva and Jugarsi. Formerly in the collection of Sir Howard Hodgkin, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, see Topsfield, 2012, p.236, no.101
- (iii) Maharana Ari Singh shooting a tiger, attributed to Jiva, 1761-62, formerly in the collection of the British Rail Pension Fund, see Losty, p.28, no.13
- (iv) Maharana Ari Singh bear-hunting, by Jiva, 1763, formerly in the Ehrenfeld Collection, sold Christie's, New York, 23 March 2023, lot 412
- (v) Maharana Ari Singh of Mewar Hunting, by Jiva, 1764: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va.: <https://www.vmfamuseum.org/artworks/maharana-ari-singh-of-mewar-hunting-beneath-the-kumbhalgarh-fort-75262>
- (vi) Maharana Ari Singh II enjoying Jagmandir, attributed to Jiva and others, circa 1767: City Palace Museum, Udaipur, see Diamond & Khera, pp.108, 114-119
- (vii) A portrait of Ari Singh and Rupaji riding elephants, by Jiva, 1767: Felton Bequest at the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, see Topsfield 1980, p.125, no.180
- (viii) A portrait of Ari Singh with his consort, circa 1761, formerly in the Benkaim Collection, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio: <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2018.147>

PROVENANCE

Christian H. Aall (1913-2008), Hawaii: Sotheby's, New York, 19 September 1999, lot 170
Spink & Son, London, 2000
Private collection, Switzerland, 2000-26

EXHIBITED

Gopis, Goddesses & Demons, Spink & Son, London, 2000, pp.136-7, no.77

PUBLISHED

Topsfield, A., *Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Zurich, 2002, p. 200, no.181

REFERENCES

Diamond, D. & Khera, D., *A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur*, Washington D.C., 2023
Losty, J.P., *Indian Painting 1650-1900*, exhibition catalogue, Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch Ltd., New York, 2010
Topsfield, A., *Paintings from Rajasthan in the National Gallery of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1980
Topsfield, A., *Visions of Mughal India: The Collection of Howard Hodgkin*, Oxford, 2012
Topsfield, A., *Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Zürich, 2002



15. **VISHNU IN HIS INCARNATION AS THE MAN-LION DISEMBOWELLING THE DEMON HIRANYAKASHIPU**
RAGHOGARH, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1750

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, black rules and red border;
on the verso a line of Devanagari and a purple ink stamp inscribed
'Raja of Raghogarh, Madhya Pradesh'
10 1/2 by 8 in.; 26.3 by 20.5 cm. painting
12 1/2 by 10 in.; 31.9 by 25.8 cm. folio

At the threshold of a domed pavilion, Vishnu as the ferocious man-lion Narasimha, tears open the belly of the demon Hiranyakashipu and pulls out his intestines. He is propitiated on the left by his great devotee and Hiranyakashipu's son, Prahalada, while a woman stands on the right. The setting is reminiscent of the theatre with curtains drawn to reveal a dramatic scene.

The demon Hiranyakashipu is granted a boon by the god Brahma that he cannot be killed, day or night, inside or outside, on the ground or in the sky, by any known weapon, by any creature created by Brahma and so on. Nearly invincible, the demon conquers the three worlds while nursing a deep hatred of Vishnu who had killed his brother. Because Hiranyakashipu's son Prahalada is an ardent devotee of Vishnu, the demon tries, unsuccessfully, to have him executed. Enraged, Hiranyakashipu decides to kill Prahalada himself but at the moment of the attack, Narasimha emerges from a pillar in the palace and slays the demon. Narasimha, who is not a creature created by Brahma, uses his claws – not a known weapon – to disembowel Hiranyakashipu whom he places on his lap, at the entrance of the palace, which is not inside or outside. Thus, Hiranyakashipu is defeated without nullifying Brahma's benediction.

In this painting, four-armed Narasimha is imagined as a tiger rather than a lion; notice his claws ripping open Hiranyakashipu's abdomen and the intestines in his upper left hand. The split pillar out of which Narasimha emerges is a typical motif in representations of this incarnation, but it is usually painted behind rather than in front of the man-lion.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

For a Mankot, circa 1700-23, portrayal of Narasimha as a tiger, see Cummins, p.150, no.68.

INSCRIPTIONS

Verso: In the top left corner, the number 5 followed by "a painting of Narasimha *avatara* (incarnation)" in Devanagari; also, a purple ink stamp that says in English "Raja of Raghogarh" and "Madhya Pradesh."

PROVENANCE

Raja of Raghogarh, Madhya Pradesh
Doris and Reinhard Biedermann, Berlin
Günter Heil (1938-2014), Berlin, acquired in the 1980s

REFERENCES

Cummins, J., ed., *Vishnu: Hinduism's Blue-Skinned Savior*, Ahmedabad, 2011

N.P.





16. RAJA AJMET DEV (r. CIRCA 1750–65) SMOKING ON A TERRACE
MANKOT, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1750-60

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with black and red rules and a pale pink border, a cursive line of Takri on the verso
 6½ by 8½ in.; 16.8 by 21.3 cm. painting
 8½ by 6½ in.; 21.8 by 16 cm. folio

On a yellow ground, the young raja kneels on a red carpet with bolsters behind, while a standing servant fans him with a peacock *morchal*. He has a black beard and wears an olive green *jama*, earrings and pale mauve turban, holding the stem of a *huqqa* in his left hand, a *katar* dagger at his waist. As most portraits of Ajmet Dev show him as a very young ruler, it is thought that he assumed the throne from his father, Raja Tedhi Singh, during his lifetime, see Archer, p.369, no.33.

Many of the other portraits of Ajmet Dev appear to be derived from one in the Chandigarh Museum, depicting the raja with his servant, circa 1730, see Archer, p.295, no.34. A portrait of him but without the servant is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74035/raja-ajmat-dev-painting-unknown>.

Another, circa 1730, is in the Museum of Fine Art, Houston: <https://emuseum.mfah.org/objects/88317/raja-ajmat-dev-of-mankot-smoking-a-hookah;jsessionid=17AA3C235FB40D34CF64F826D37174B7>

PROVENANCE
 Philip Allen (1938-2022), England

REFERENCES
 Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973



FOLIO FROM A DISPERSED RAGAMALA SERIES

17. KAKUBHA RAGINI
RAGHOGARH, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1760

Opaque pigments with gold on paper
 7¼ by 4¾ in.; 20 by 11.1 cm. painting
 10 by 6½ in.; 25.4 by 16.8 cm. folio

In a highly stylised landscape of layered flowering trees, storks and parakeets fly against a blue sky. Below a maiden holding lotus blossoms wanders through the woods accompanied by a peacock and casting a sideways glance. In the foreground ducks, turtles and lotus flowers crowd around the edge of a lake. A blank panel of egg-yolk yellow at the top of the painting would originally have been intended for text.

Three folios from this *ragamala* series are in the National Museum, New Delhi, a fourth is in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio.

PROVENANCE
 Doris Wiener Gallery, New York, 1970s
 Cynthia Polsky (1939-2024), New York, 1976-2008
 Christie's, New York, 16 September 2008, lot 479
 Ramesh Kapoor Gallery, New York, 2008-15
 Private collection, New York, 2015-26

REFERENCES
 Cleveland Museum of Art:
<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1975-40>



FROM THE COLLECTION OF W.G. ARCHER

18. RAJA SHAMSER SEN (1722-81) OF MANDI
MANDI, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1775

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, black rules and red border, a short inscription in Takri on the upper border
8¾ by 7in.; 22 by 17.7cm. painting
10¾ by 8¾ in.; 27.3 by 22cm. folio

On a moss green ground, the heavily bearded raja is smoking a huqqa while seated against a large bolster on a striped dhurrie. A servant in white stands behind, fanning him with a peacock morchal. A visitor, also in white, perhaps the chief minister, carries a tall gold-tipped staff and offers a greeting with joined hands. Shamsar Sen wears a long red pleated jama, a garland of jasmine and a pendant veil of jasmine and marigolds suspended from his plumed turban. He stares at his guest with a very beady eye.

Amongst the Pahari schools of painting in the Punjab Hills, Mandi stands out for its distinctive palette and its eccentric rulers. Portrait painting seems to have emerged under the reign of Raja Sid Sen (1684-1727), the grandfather of the present sitter, who set an example of eccentricity that passed down through the generations of rulers. Mandi painters employ unusual colours such as slate blue and olive green with the usual red borders.

THE SUBJECT

In 1727 Shamsar Sen succeeded his grandfather at the age of five becoming the eleventh Raja of Mandi. In his discussion of this portrait, Archer (1976, pp.110-11, no.59) says the ruler was known for: 'mental instability, a wilful liking for low companions, crazy habits and even at times for odd dressings-up'. For a near-identical companion painting, naming the sitter, formerly in the Seitz Collection, see Losty, pp.340-1, no.96.

Shamsar Sen is depicted in a third version, but in mirror reverse, in the Binney Collection in the San Diego Museum of Art, California, see Binney, p.89, no.67. A painting in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, shows him walking with his half-brother:

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O120869/raja-shamsher-sen-and-dhurchatia-painting-unknown/>. Another, in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, shows him dressed as Siva: <https://searchcollection.asianart.org/objects/10907/raja-shamsher-sen-of-mandi-in-the-guise-of-the-hindu-deity-s>

INSCRIPTIONS

sri davan in Takri
'chief minister'

PROVENANCE

S.N. Kalia, April 1962
W.G. Archer (1907-79), London, before 1967
By descent in the Archer family, London: Christie's, London, 23 September 2005, lot 74
Private collection, New York, 2005-2026

PUBLISHED

Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures and Folk Paintings*, London, 1967, fig.31
Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, Mandi, p.272, no. 36
Archer, W.G., *Pahari Paintings, a Concise History*, London, 1975, pl.18
Archer, W.G., *Visions of Courtly India: The Archer Collection of Pahari Miniatures*, London and New York, 1976, pp. 110-1, no. 59

REFERENCES

Archer, W.G., *Visions of Courtly India: The Archer Collection of Pahari Miniatures*, London and New York, 1976
Binney, E., *Rajput Miniatures from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd*, Portland, 1968
Losty, J.P., *A Mystical Realm of Love: Pahari Paintings from the Eva and Konrad Seitz Collection*, London, 1997



**19. JHAROKA PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG PRINCE
MUGHAL INDIA, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with gold rules and a foliate border on a pale brown ground
6½ by 4 in.; 16.9 by 10.4 cm. painting
7½ by 5 in.; 19.8 by 13 cm. folio

The portrait is set at the window of a white marble palace archway. The young prince is seated in profile, his right arm resting on a brocade textile draped over the edge of the window, a bolster behind. He holds a *firman* in his right hand and his left is raised in gesture, perhaps towards the recipient. A double gilt rayed halo encircles his head, his youthful face is carefully rendered, his hair and moustache short, a double pearl earring visible. He wears a saffron and gold brocade turban draped with a string of pearls, spinels and other gems. His dark blue *jama* is exquisitely decorated with a gold foliate meander pattern, over it he wears a short and two long strings of pearls, the former suspended with a large ruby, and what appears to be a portrait medallion.

Jharoka portraits of the emperor originated in the seventeenth century, recalling the daily audience of the emperor when he would declaim to the public from the Diwan-i Khas at the Red Fort in Delhi. Here an unidentified Mughal prince is depicted but in the course of the eighteenth century the *jharoka* developed as a portrait device. Such portraits would have been placed in an album, this page forming the left-hand side of a double page spread, perhaps with a portrait of the recipient opposite.

For a *jharoka* portrait of Jahangir, circa 1630-40, now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, see Losty, no.4. Also see Falk & Archer, pp.417, 420, 203, nos.138(ii), 161, 203

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Switzerland, formed between 1970s-90s
Christie's, London, 24 April 2015, lot 21
Rosebery's, London, 12 June 2019, lot 54

REFERENCES

Falk, T. and Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981
Losty, J.P., *Indian and Persian Court Painting*, Asia Week, Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch Ltd., New York, 2018

AN ILLUSTRATION TO A RUKMINI-HARANA SERIES

**20. SHISUPALA'S RETINUE ARRIVES IN PROCESSION AT KUNDINAPURA
GARHWAL, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1775**

Opaque pigments with gold paper, red borders ruled in white, verso lined in paper with short Takri inscription
11½ by 8½ in.; 28 by 21.5 cm. folio

Princess Rukmini's eldest brother, Rumka welcomes Krishna's cousin and enemy Shishupala, who is riding a horse and leads him to Kundinapura. He is surrounded by his attendants, some of whom follow him on horseback and four who walk in front holding banners, all ready for battle with swords, spears, and shields. Shishupala and his companion, each on horseback, Rumka turned in gesture toward the arriving party.

Kundinapura was the capital of the Vidarbha kingdom ruled by King Bhishmaka, father of Rumka and Rukmini. Shishupala, son of King Damaghosha and Srutashubha (the sister of Vasudeva and Kunti), was the King of the Chedi kingdom.

THIS SERIES

This Rukmini-Harana series comprised fifteen paintings and, according to Mukund Lal, two from the series were sold to J.C. French in 1930, before the remaining 13 were acquired by him from Balak Ram in 1952.

Twelve of these are published in Lal's book, *Garhwal Painting*, New Delhi, 1968, each illustrated in colour. One is now in the Brooklyn Museum of Art (Lal, pl.25) and another is in the Binney Collection, San Diego Museum of Art, California (Lal, pl.26).
<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/objects/124974>
<https://collection.sdmart.org/objects-1/info/6108>

OTHER RUKMINI-HARANA SERIES

For three paintings from another Rukmini-Harana series, 1780-90, two formerly in the Archer Collection and one the Victoria & Albert Museum, see Archer, vol. 1, p.85, no.20 (i-iii). He suggests its similarity to, 'Rukmini and the messenger', a red-ground (a "Guler idiom") painting from a Krishna Rukmini series, Garhwal, 1775-85, formerly in the Rothenstein Collection and now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, see Archer, vol.1, pp.83 & 115, no.12. See also Goswamy and Fischer, p.345, no.147, for a red-ground illustration to another Rukmini series, 1790-1800, *A Brahmin brings Krishna's reply to Princess Rukmini's message*.

In a note to a Nurpur painting, Archer (p.400, note to no.33), mentions the whole of the series from which the present painting comes, as published by Lal, comprising twelve paintings. These he ascribes to Nurpur, circa 1760, describing nos. 3, 14 & 25 as having red-grounds. He explains their presence in a Garhwal collection as being due to dynastic marriages between Sudarshan Shah of Tehri Garhwal and Bir Singh of Nurpur, the latter's son having married the former's daughter.

PROVENANCE

Balak Ram Sah of Srinagar, Garhwal
Mukandi Lal (1885-1982), acquired from the above in 1952
Arthur L. Funk (1914-2007), acquired in 1970: Skinners, Boston, 16 May 2015, lot 11
With Ramesh Kapoor, New York, 2015
Private collection, New York, 2015-26

PUBLISHED

Ions, V., *Indian Mythology*, London and New York, 1967, p. 70.
Lal, M., *Garhwal Painting, India*, Government Ministry of Information, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 88-89.

REFERENCES

Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973
Goswamy, B.S. and Fischer, E., *Pahari Masters*, Zürich, 1992
Lal, M., *Garhwal Painting, India*, Government Ministry of Information, New Delhi, 1968





FOLIO FROM A DISPERSED BHAGAVATA PURANA SERIES

21. THE BIRTH OF KRISHNA

KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1780

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, black and white rules with blue border

10½ by 7½ in.; 27 by 20 cm. painting

11½ by 8½ in.; 29 by 22 cm. folio

In the darkness, at midnight, luminous Krishna is born inside a prison cell. In the artist's interpretation this is in fact a white marble pavilion, the upper chamber with a white-ground floral carpet and a rolled brocade blind. Below two sleeping guards flank the doorway, a red sandstone interior within. The figures of Krishna's parents, Devaki and Vasudeva, are attired in court dress and jewellery.

At the wedding of his parents, a voice foretells that their eighth son, Krishna, will cause the demise of his uncle, Kamsa, the prince of Mathura. Kamsa incarcerates the newlyweds with the intention of killing their children, and makes himself king.

In the painting, Krishna's parents are awe-struck by his blue-skinned, four-armed form at birth which resembles Vishnu; they stand on either side of him with their hands folded in adoration. Krishna is in fact an incarnation of Vishnu and carries his attributes – conch shell, discus, mace, and lotus – when he is born. With

the folded curtain above and devotees on either side, Krishna resembles an icon prepared for *darshan*. Notice the shackles near the feet of Krishna's parents that do not restrain them anymore, and the guards on either side of the prison entrance who have fallen asleep; all impediments to Krishna's escape are removed and his father will whisk him away to safety. Krishna will return to Mathura as a youth to vanquish Kamsa.

In another contemporaneous Kangra depiction of the Birth of Krishna, in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, the two slumbering guards are similar, see: https://museumsfindia.gov.in/repository/record/im_kol-R9027-234

For a Basohli scene with a near identical composition, depicting the swapping of Krishna with Yogamaya, see Khandalavala, study supplement, no. 61.

PROVENANCE

Anthony Powell (1935-2021), the Oscar-winning costume designer, London: Rosebery's, London, 14 June 2022, lot 313

REFERENCES

Khandalavala, K., *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958

N.P.



AN IMPORTANT EARLY WORK BY MIRZA BABA

22. EARLY QAJAR PORTRAIT OF A COURTESAN

SIGNED MIRZA BABA (FL.1789-1810)

PROBABLY ASTARABAD

PERSIA, DATED A.H.1208 / 1793-94 A.D.

Oil on canvas, signed at lower left in *nasta'liq*, lined, gilt frame
32¼ by 30¾ in.; 82 by 78 cm.

The Qajars were an aristocratic family that emerged in the sixteenth century as head of the Turkoman Qajar tribe of the Qizilbash confederacy. Mohammad Khan Qajar (r.1789-97) brought about the unification of Persia and became the founding prince of the dynasty, which ruled from 1789-1925.

The portrait depicts a young and beautiful courtesan, seated on a banquette in a palace interior with a window and a tasseled bolster behind her. She is wearing heavily-embroidered floral trousers, a short pleated skirt around the waist and a diaphanous jacket of fine muslin, a striped shawl flung over her right shoulder. Her rouged face confronts the viewer and “reflect(s) the late Zand/early Qajar ideal of beauty” (Diba & Ekhtiar, p.207), with dark eyes, rosebud mouth, heavy eye-brows and henna’d navel. She wears pearl and gem earrings, a striped scarf tied in her dark hair, a rose at her neck. In her henna’d hands she holds a glass of wine and a flask, a porcelain bowl of greengages and cherries to her right, a swagged green curtain behind her to the left. The back of the banquette has a woven geometric design.

Many Qajar portraits and still lifes have the pointed shape of this canvas, a form familiar from Safavid and Qajar architecture, see Fellingner & Guillaume, pp. 34, 54 & 368-9 and Guadalupi, pp.57, 61, 65 & 69. Such paintings were made to decorate interiors where they were set into the walls in specially designed niches.

THE ARTIST

The two most outstanding portrait painters of the Qajar period are Mirza Baba (fl.1789-1810), who was active in the early years of the dynasty, and Mihr ‘Ali, who was active later in the reign of Fath ‘Ali Shah.

Mirza Baba appears to have been trained by the master painter of the Zand period (1751-89), Muhammad Sadiq (Shiraz, fl.1740-90), before being adopted by the new Qajar court. Falk, pp.25-32, cites various early works and points to his skill in treating fruit,

omnipresent in Qajar painting, in a realistic textured manner, something that can be observed in the present portrait. Under Fath ‘Ali Shah (r.1797-1834) Mirza Baba flourished and was made *naqqash-bashi*, or chief painter to the court, producing one of the most magnificent and unsettling portraits of the young Shah, dated 1799, only one year after his accession, in the India Office Collections at the British Library, London (Falk, pp.32-3, no.12). A later work attributed to him, *Two Harem Girls*, circa 1811-14, in the Royal Asiatic Society, London, relates to this portrait in terms of subject. However, at this point his style has developed into the brighter more emphatic palette of the middle of the reign and it lacks the subtle appeal of the present portrait.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

The work that best compares to this is Mirza Baba’s *A Topsy Lady*, dated A.H.1215 / 1800-01 A.D., formerly in the Aryeh Collection, New York, see Diba & Ekhtiar, p.159, no.28. In this portrait, painted six or seven years after ours, the subject is also a court lady, seated in a similarly luxurious setting, holding a glass of wine and an apple.

INSCRIPTIONS

raqam-i kamtarin mirza baba sana 1208

“Work of the most humble Mirza Baba, year [A.H.] 1208” [1793-94 A.D.]

PROVENANCE

Private collection, acquired 1969-70

By descent, private collection, Kingspoint, New York, 1974-2026

REFERENCES

Diba, L. and Ekhtiar, M., *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925*, London, 1998

Falk, S.J., *Qajar Paintings: Persian Oil Paintings of the 18th and 19th Centuries*, London, 1972

Fellingner, G. & Guillaume, C., *L’Empire des roses: Chefs-d’oeuvre de l’art persan du XIXe siècle*, Lens, 2018

Guadalupi, G., ed., *Qajar*, Milan, 1990



FOLIO FROM A DISPERSED BARAMASA SERIES

23. THE MONTH OF ASHADHA
BUNDI OR UNIARA, RAJASTHAN
SECOND HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, black and white rules with red border, four lines of Devanagari on the upper border, a short single line in the foreground, another on the verso
10¼ by 6 in.; 26 by 15.2 cm. painting
12½ by 6½ in.; 31.5 by 17 cm. folio

In the tempestuous month of Ashadha, gods, humans, and animals choose to stay indoors.

The *barahmasa*, literally twelve months, is a literary genre where the poems describe a woman's longing for her lover or husband. The complexion of the woman's emotions changes over the year and is either reflected in, or is in painful contrast with, occurrences in nature. The verse inscribed above the present painting is about Ashadha (June to July) – the month when the monsoon begins across much of the Subcontinent; the woman exhorts her lover not to depart because the weather is dreadful. She claims that birds do not leave their nests and even Vishnu spends this month in bed with his consort.



In the painting, a couple sits on a bed in a palace during a storm; the woman speaks to her lover who is imagined as the blue-skinned god Krishna, the archetypal hero. She points with her right hand at a miniature pavilion in the water in the bottom left, where Vishnu rests with his consort. The artist visualizes this as well as the other examples she uses to convince her lover to remain at home.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Another painting from this *Barahmasa* series, depicting the month of Magha, is in the Rietberg Museum, Zürich, inv. no. RV 801. At the court workshops of Bundi, Kota, and Uniara, artists often based their paintings on earlier ones of the same subject. For other paintings depicting the month of Ashadha see Bautze, pp.153-154, no. 59, now also in the Rietberg Museum, Zürich, inv. no. RVI 2035. Another depiction, also formerly in the Heeramanek Collection, is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, see Beach, p.131-132, no.171 and Heeramanek, p.67, pl.59-60.

INSCRIPTIONS

Recto: upper border, a section of the *Barahmasa* text by Keshavdas, from Canto 10 of his *Kavipriya* (1601); in the lower border, *ashadha masa*, literally Ashadha month, followed by the number 4.

Verso: *Ashadha masa*, literally Ashadha month, followed by the number 4.

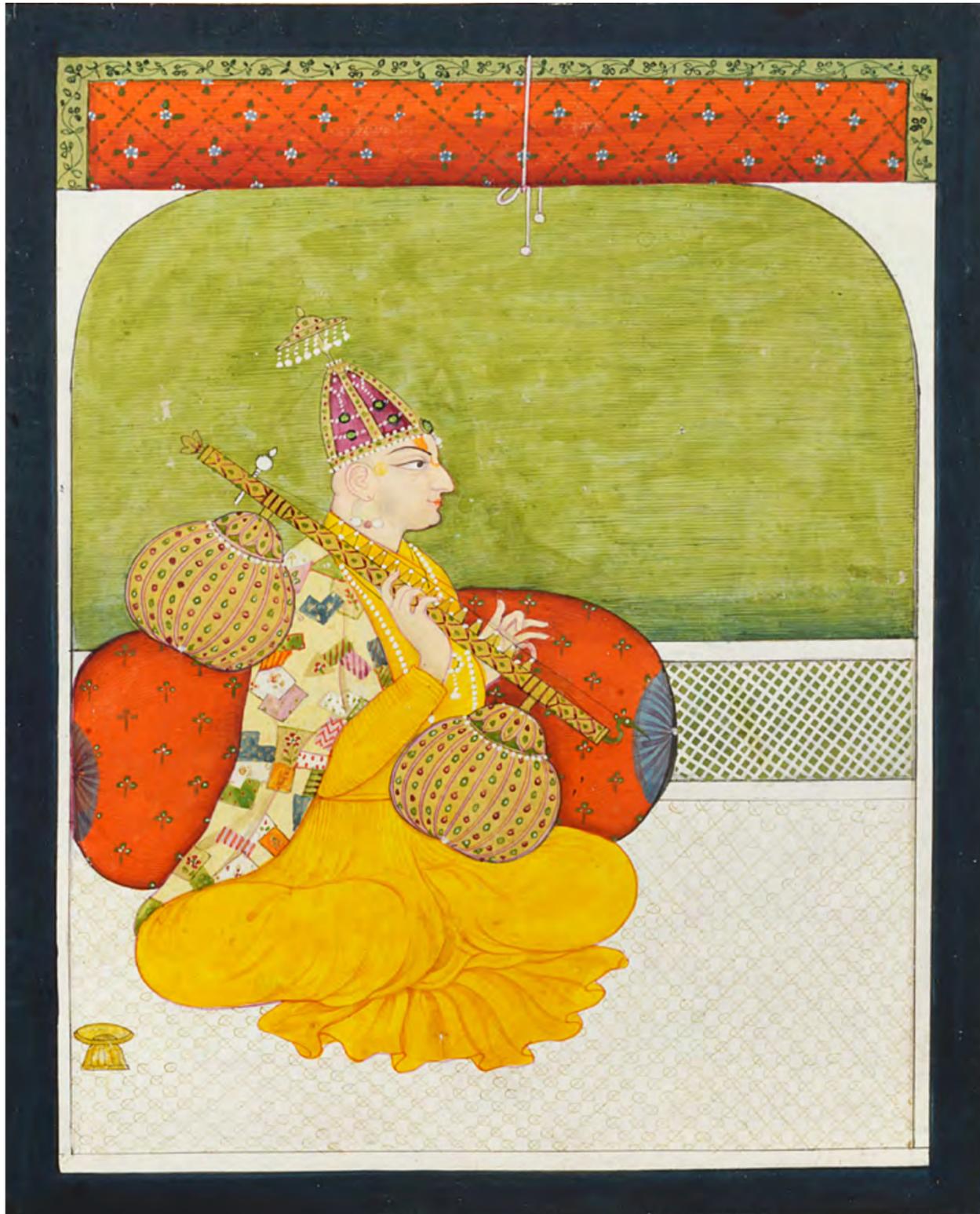
PROVENANCE

Nasli Heeramanek (1902-71), New York
Dr. Claus Virch (1927-2012), Paris: Sotheby's, New York, March 16, 2016, lot 812
With Carlton Rochell Asian Art, New York, 2020
Kevin R. Brine, Santa Barbara: Sotheby's, New York, 20 March 2025, lot 547

REFERENCES

Agrawal, V., "Barahmasa - A Song of Twelve Months," *Indian Literature*, vol. 69, no. 4 (348), New Delhi, (July–August 2025), pp. 142-147
Beach, M. "Rajput and Related Paintings" in Rosenfield, J., Pal, P., Beach, M., and Cavallo A. S., *The Arts of India and Nepal: The Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection*, Boston, 1966
Heeramanek, A., *Masterpieces of Indian Painting*, Verona, 1984
N.P.





**24. MAHANT BAGVAN PLAYING A VINA
KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1780-90**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, black margin and plain borders, his name inscribed in white Devanagari on the upper border

5½ by 4½ in.; 14.5 by 10.6 cm. painting

8½ by 6½ in.; 21.5 by 17 cm. folio

The mahant sits on a white marble terrace looking out through an arch with rolled blind to an expanse of greenery, a small spittoon in the foreground. A large orange bolster with floral motifs supports him as he sits cross-legged playing a gem-set gold vina, his fingers poised in the middle of a raga, his face with a distant expression of concentration. He wears a saffron robe, a string of pearls, a large ring earring and a polychrome dervish's cloak of patchwork. He is shaven-headed, his face with pursed lips, almond-shaped eyes and bulging neck below his domed purple hat strung with pearls and gemstones, surmounted by a parasol finial.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

The mahants are a group of spiritual leaders, often head priest of a temple. A number of portraits of them are known.

- (i) A joint portrait of the Mahants Bhagwanji and Narainji, Nurpur, 1650-75, is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, (1994-148-511), see Bhatia, fig.11.
- (ii) A Devgarh portrait of Karni Mata, signed by Bagta and dated 1807, is on loan from a private U.S. collection to the Cincinnati Museum of Art, Ohio.
- (iii) A Nurpur, circa 1725-50, painting in the National Museum, New Delhi, depicts Nirmalji and Bhagvanji, undergoing the Ordeal by Liquor ordered by Jahangir:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/gallery/new-delhi-museum-paintings/9183>

INSCRIPTIONS

'Bhagvan', the name of the mahant

PROVENANCE

John (1928-2024) and Berthe Gilmore Ford, Baltimore
Private collection, New York, 2010-26

REFERENCES

Bhatia, U., "Rediscovery of the Bathu Manuscript," in Goswami, B.W., *Indian Painting: Essays in honour of Karl J. Khandalavala*, Lalit Kala, New Delhi, 1995





ILLUSTRATION FROM A DISPERSED BHAGAVATA PURANA SERIES

25. SHUKADEVA RECOUNTS THE BHAGAVATA PURANA TO KING PARIKSHIT
GARHWAL, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1790

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, white rules with blue border
8¾ by 10½ in.; 22.3 by 27 cm. painting
9¾ by 11½ in.; 25.1 by 29 cm. folio

In a domed pavilion in the middle of swirling silvery water, Shukadeva relates the *Bhagavata Purana* to King Parikshit who sits with his hands folded. In the background, domed green hills with rows of single trees rise against a stylised bright red sky fringed with a sliver of white-edged blue.

No single person is credited as author of the *Bhagavata Purana*, the authoritative compendium of the mythology of Vishnu; rather the text unfolds as a succession of dialogues within dialogues, with various narrators recounting the narrative to different interlocutors through the ages. One speaker might reference another who has communicated the *Bhagavata Purana* previously, creating a series of nested narratives. The principal narrator is the learned renunciant Shukadeva, who picks up the thread at the behest of King Parikshit. One earlier moment of misjudgement resulted in the king being cursed by a sage to die in seven days from a snake bite. Giving up his kingdom, he repairs to the banks of the Ganga where he meets Shukadeva – and asks what a man on the verge of death should do. Shukadeva's response to this and other questions is the framework through which much of the *Bhagavata Purana* progresses.

In this painting, the two figures are seated in a finely painted pavilion that rises out of the Ganga. Some versions of the story say that a host of protective measures against snakes were taken and perhaps the location of the pavilion was one among them. Shukadeva is recognizable by his matted locks, saffron robes, and prayer-bead jewellery; he holds a manuscript page in his hand – meant to indicate the *Bhagavata Purana* – and speaks to the courtly figure of the king.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

For a similar composition, from the Ramesh and Urmil Kapoor Collection, in the Norton Simon Museum, California, see Pal, pp.82-83, 176, no.35

PROVENANCE

Anonymous sale: Sotheby's, London, 12 October 1981, lot 104
Maggs Bros., London, Bulletin no.35, 1982, no.38
Private collection, England, 1982-2012: Christie's, London, 4 October 2012, lot 212
Private collection, Hong Kong, 2012-26

REFERENCES

Pal, P., *Painted Poems: Rajput Paintings from the Ramesh and Urmil Kapoor Collection*, Los Angeles, 2004

N.P.



26. TWO PRINCESSES AND A BOY PRINCE ON A TERRACE WITH FOUR ATTENDANTS
KOTAH, RAJASTHAN, EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, yellow margins ruled in white, the red border painted in silver with four cusped foliate medallions
10¾ by 9 in.; 27 by 22.9 cm. painting
13¼ by 10½ in.; 33.6 by 27.5 cm. folio

Against an ice-blue sky one of the two ladies seated on a cool white marble terrace offers a gold cup to the young boy seated on his mother's lap. The boy prince reaches out to accept, his otherwise nude body clad in a long pleated open coat and copious pearls, the latter leaving his royal status in no doubt. The three central figures sit on luxurious pink and green velvet bolsters and carpet. In the foreground is a parterre with cusped pool and *char-bagh* to either side while beyond the railings is a forest of flowering plants and trees including banana and cypress.

All four ladies are dressed in long pleated skirts, translucent *odhnis* and pearl and gem-set jewellery. The two flanking figures brandish peacock *morchals*, a lady in the right foreground plays a *vina* and, opposite her, another offers *paan* with between them an array of other refreshments.

The artist has captured a tranquil scene where royal ladies are celebrating the life of the young prince and perhaps heir to his father's kingdom.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, England
Bonhams, Knightsbridge, 9 June 2015, lot 371
Private collection, Hong Kong, 2015-26

27. PRINCE ANIRUDH CHAND WITH FOUR BOY ATTENDANTS

KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1790-1800

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, ruled in white with a red border, inscribed in cursive Persian above and in Devanagari below, with cover sheet

7 by 4½ in.; 17.8 by 11.5 cm. painting

8¾ by 6 in.; 22.3 by 15.3 cm. folio

The painting portrays Prince Anirudh Chand as a boy, wearing a decorative saffron *jama*, jewellery, boots and a fur-lined hat, and carrying a sword. He is flanked by four young attendants,



two on either side, who are plainly dressed and barefoot, with caps that match the colour of the prince's outfit. The two on the right carry a bow and quiver of arrows and a fly whisk, the latter emphasizing the prince's royal status. The attendant on the outside left carries a stick while the fourth proffers what seem to be flowers to the prince.

SUBJECT

Prince Kunwar Anirudh Chand (1786-1831) was the son and heir of Maharaja Sansar Chand (r.1775-1823), who was an important patron of generations of court artists following the great Nainsukh (1710-78). The 1803-06 wars with the Sikhs and the Gurkhas began the eclipse of his political power and, in 1809, Sansar Chand lost control of his fortress capital at Kangra to the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh. Both father and son were exiled to southern Kangra and Anirudh Chand died in exile at Hardiwar in 1831.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Boyhood portraits of Anirudh Chand usually show him with his father (Victoria & Albert Museum, London, see Archer p.201, no.18); they may appear together in a *darbar* scene by Purkhu as in Beach, Fischer & Goswamy, p.723 (Philadelphia Museum of Art) or at worship, circa 1795, as in Losty, p.356, no.102, formerly in the Seitz Collection. A further portrait of him, as an older child, playing on swings with his friends, circa 1796, is in the Custodia Foundation, Paris, see Gahlin, p.81, no.87, pl.89

INSCRIPTIONS

The cursive Persian inscription identifies the prince:
maharaj kunwar anirudh chand ba-'umr-i chahar(?) salagi
"Prince Kunwar Anirudh Chand at the age of four(?) years"

The Devanagari reading:

On recto: *shri maharaj ji sahev ji*
"respected ruler" where *sahev* is perhaps *saheb* or "sir"
On verso: *yuvraj anirudh chand* (in pen)
"crown prince Anirudh Chand"

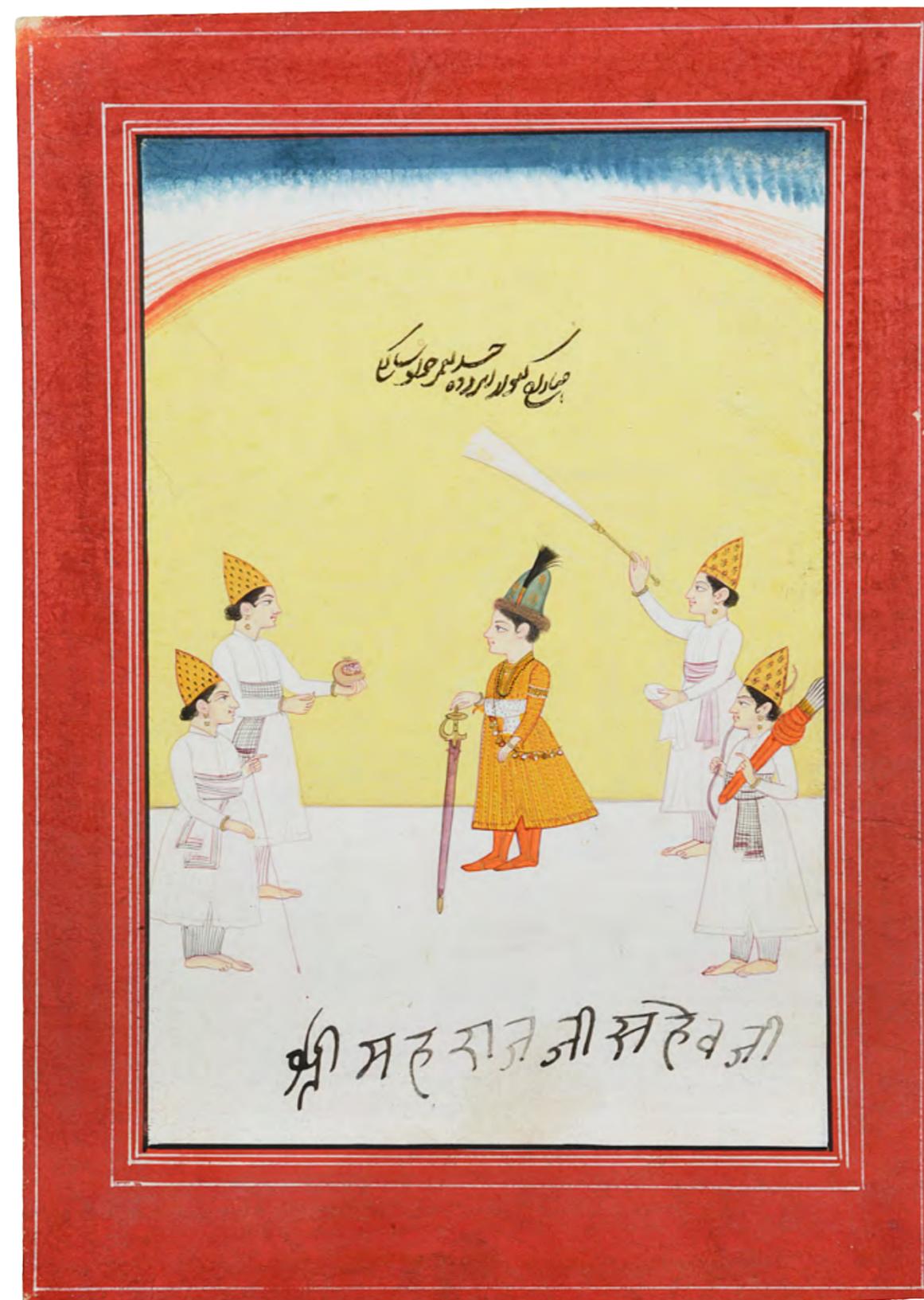
PROVENANCE

Private collection, Germany
Private collection, Hong Kong, 2010-26

REFERENCES

Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills; A Survey and History of Pahari Miniature Painting*, London, 1973
Beach, M.C., Fischer, E. and Goswamy, B.N., eds., *Masters of Indian Painting*, Zürich, 2011
Gahlin, S., *The Courts of India: Indian Miniatures from the Collection of the Foundation Custodia*, Paris, Zwolle, 1991
Losty, J.P., *A Mystical Realm of Love: Pahari Paintings from the Eva and Konrad Seitz Collection*, London, 2017

N.P.



FOLIO FROM A DISPERSED RAGAMALA SERIES

28. RAGAPUTRA KHOKHAR OF MALKOS RAGA
KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1800

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with blue-ground floral margin and white rules with a red border, a line of Devanagari in white on the upper border

9 by 7¼ in.; 23 by 18.5 cm. painting

11½ by 9½ in.; 30 by 24.5 cm. folio

On a palace terrace, a lone figure in courtly attire lifts up the corner of his garment and puts one foot forward in a delicate dance step; the ankle bells on his feet indicate that he is a dancer. He stands on a striped blue *dhurrie* outside a pavilion with a striking royal blue canopy embroidered in gold with cusped medallions and foliage. A panoply of musical instruments is laid before him, comprising two *veenas*, a *tambur*, *sarangi*, *sitar*, cymbals, wood castanets and a pair of kettle-drums, suggesting a performance will either begin soon or has just ended.

Kshema Karna's sixteenth century classification of *ragas* or musical modes forms the basis of most Pahari *ragamala* paintings. In this system, the *ragas* are divided into six families with one parent *raga*, five *raginis* (female), and eight *ragaputras* or sons. Khokhar is the eighth *ragaputra* of Malkos; he is described as a young man in loose-fitting clothes, dancing to the music of clouds (or thunder) and drums. For further discussion of the complexities of *ragamala* painting see Dallapiccola, Skelton & Glynn, pp.13-37.

In this unusual work, no music is being played but the painter has captured the subject in a dance movement. He glances backwards, frowning in concentration or as if in anticipation that the musicians will arrive soon.

INSCRIPTIONS

In the top border in Devanagari:

"Raga Khokhar son of Malkos" followed by the number "8."

PROVENANCE

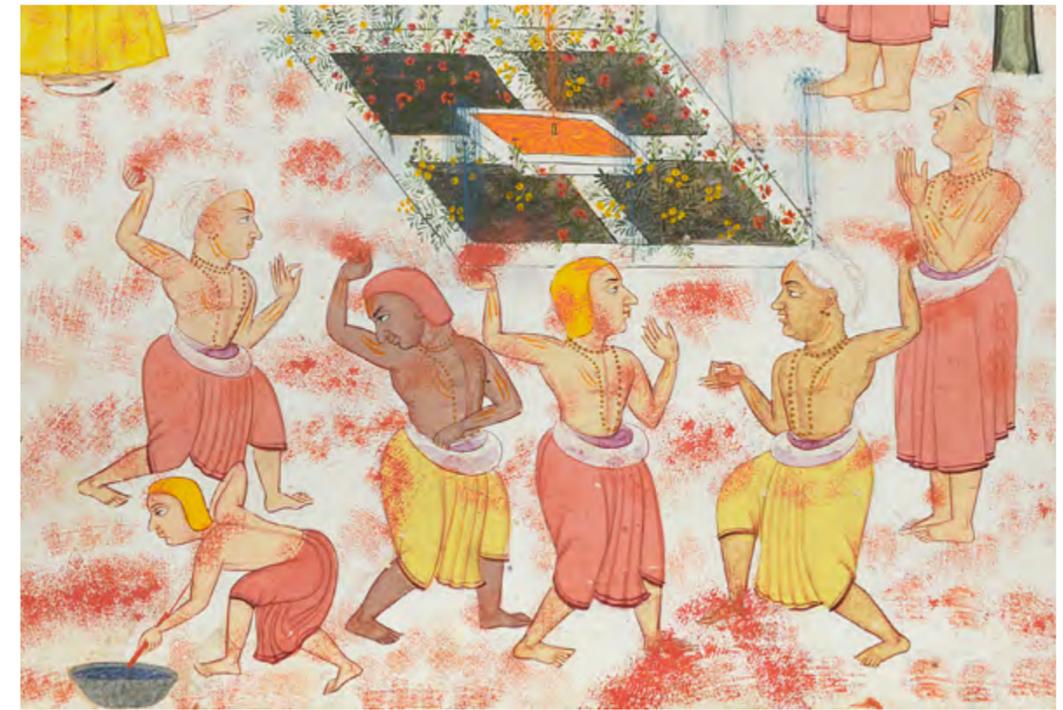
John (1928-2024) and Berthe Gilmore Ford, Baltimore
Private collection, New York, 2012-26

REFERENCES

Dallapiccola, A.L., Skelton, R. and Glynn, C., *Ragamala: Paintings from India from the Claudio Moscatelli Collection*, London, 2011

N.P.





**29. KRISHNA AND RADHA CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL OF HOLI
MEWAR, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1750**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, black and white rules with a red border, eleven lines of Devanagari on the verso
12½ by 7¾ in.; 31.8 by 18.7 cm. painting
14¾ by 9¾ in.; 36.5 by 23.8 cm. folio

The festival of Holi is an important annual festival in which colour is used to celebrate love and the arrival of spring. It also represents the triumph of good over evil by commemorating the victory of Vishnu as Narasimha over Hiranyakashipu (see this catalogue no.15). Central to it are Krishna and Radha, seen here, and the celebration of their divine and eternal love.

In a princely garden, the divine couple is suspended on a swing from the boughs of a group of spring-flowering trees in which peacocks and other birds nest. To their right a priest approaches bringing them an offering. Each is dressed in saffron robes and pearl jewellery, holding a handful of coloured pigment aloft. Behind them to the left is the monkey-headed god Hanuman and three princes, one of which waves a fly-whisk (*chauri*). In front of the swing is a small *char-bagh*, its central pond already saffron-coloured. In the foreground six bare-chested young Vaishnava men throw coloured pigments at each other, one of them filling a syringe from a bowl.

The painting conveys a mood of joyful abandon and celebration, combining the dignity of the divine couple and their dignitaries with the youthful scene of entering the fray of the festival in the foreground.

INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions relate to the subject matter of the painting

PROVENANCE

Robert P. Youngman (1940-2018), New York
Sotheby's, New York, 21 March 2019, lot 966
Private collection, Hong Kong, 2019-26

30. TIGER-WOMAN IN A RIVER

MANDI OR CHAMBA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1800-10

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, ruled in white with a navy-ground border with gilt circles

5½ by 8½ in.; 14.8 by 21.2 cm. painting

6¼ by 9 in.; 16.1 by 23.2 cm. folio

In a fast-flowing river, the tiger-woman casts a glance of some intensity towards the two figures on the bank at upper right, one of whom seems to be undressing to join her in the river. Her long black tresses fan out around her and she wears pearl and gold jewellery including hair-ornaments, earrings and a nose-ring, an indication of her high status. Each of her paws is formed of a tiger-head and her elongated tail terminates in a crocodile head. The two male figures at upper right are in courtly dress contrasting with two boys at the left who are inflating skins with which to cross the water. Beyond them is a typically Pahari landscape with gentle hills, trees and a blue sky.

The identity of this particular hybrid is unclear, but composite animals and mythical beings that are half-human, half-animal are ubiquitous in the art of South Asia. A *yali* is a creature that typically has the body of a lion and the head of an animal (for example elephant, called a *gaja yali*) or human (*nara yali*). When the body is a tiger's, it is called a *shardula*. Often depicted in South Indian temples, *yalis* act as guardians and protectors.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

A closely related painting of the same subject is in the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, similar but for the absence of the two boys with buffalo-skins, see Devaney & Prosek, pp.48, 52, pl.35.

PROVENANCE

Doris and Reinhard Biedermann, Berlin

Günter Heil (1938-2014), Berlin, acquired in the 1980s

REFERENCES

Devaney, E. and Prosek, J., *James Prosek: Art, Artifact, Artifice*, New Haven, 2020

N.P.





31. COMPOSITE ELEPHANT RIDDEN BY A DIV
BIKANER OR JODHPUR, RAJASTHAN
DATED SAMVAT 1873 / 1813-14 A.D.

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, white and yellow rules with red border, Devanagari inscriptions on the verso
8½ by 5½ in.; 20.8 by 13.6 cm. painting
10½ by 8 in.; 27 by 20.4 cm. folio

The elephant is mostly composed of animals including elephants, horses, rams, a goat, antelopes, monkeys, a tiger attacking a bull and hares forming the feet. Around the head are bristle-bodied intertwined creatures that seem to be part of the *div's* team: a *makara* and a wolf-headed creature in the deadly embrace of a bearded, blue-bodied, black-horned devil wearing an orange *dhoti*. Finally the trunk is formed of a fish, a snake enclosed in its scrolling head.

The nimbate *div* takes the role of the *mahout*, sitting upright brandishing a snake and an *ankus*. He sports a pair of orange shorts over his bristle-covered pink body, a snake forming his belt, his evil-exuding face with handlebar moustache, saw-edged ears and wavering horns.

The origin of the *div* in Indo-Persian culture may go back as far as the Vedas and they are already a demonic force in Ferdowsi's tenth century *Shahnameh*. The *div* is typically human but of terrifying size and strength, with horns, hairy flesh, boar-like teeth and frizzed hair. Grotesque of appearance and imbued with supernatural powers, they are cruel and menacing with a peculiar relish for human flesh. In Indian and Persian painting they are frequently found accompanying these composite animals, the precise meaning of which continues to evade scholars. Such paintings are found in almost all schools of Indian painting and in both the Hindu and Muslim traditions.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

For a similar composite elephant, Bikaner or Jodhpur, 1770-1800, in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, see Del Bonta, p.79, no.12. A Deccan or Mughal composite elephant, 1700-1750, is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, see Topsfield, pp.128-9, no.60. A fine Akbar period Mughal drawing of a composite elephant, circa 1600, from the Binney Collection, is in the San Diego Museum of Art, see Goswamy & Smith, pp.134-5, no.51.

INSCRIPTIONS

At the top:
"Rama ji" with below a description of the painting
On the right:
Jodhpur is mentioned, along with the date Samvat 1873

PROVENANCE

Christie's, South Kensington, London, 28 April 2017, lot 357
Private collection, Hong Kong, 2017-26

REFERENCES

Del Bonta, R.J., "Reinventing Nature: Mughal Composite Animal Painting", in Verma, S.P., *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art*, Bombay, 1999
Goswamy, B.K. and Smith, C., *Domains of Wonder: Selected Masterworks of Indian Painting*, San Diego, 2005
Topsfield, A., *Paintings from Mughal India*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 2008



THREE PAGES FROM A RAMAYANA MANUSCRIPT ATTRIBUTED TO PURKHU OF KANGRA

The *Ramayana* (“the story of Rama”) epic recounts the adventures of Rama, an incarnation of the great god Vishnu, born to restore cosmic balance between good and evil. Rama is the son of Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya, and his eldest queen; he has three half-brothers from Dashartha’s other two queens. Soon after his marriage to Sita, Rama is exiled for fourteen years. During this banishment, Sita is kidnapped by the ten-headed demon Ravana, whom Rama vanquishes before returning to Ayodhya.

The *Ramayana* series to which the following three paintings belong is attributed to the artist Purkhu and his workshop, patronised by Maharaja Sansar Chand of Kangra. Three other folios from the same series were exhibited during Asia Week New York 2025, see *Animals, Birds and Portraits: Works on Paper from India and Persia*, nos.34-36, where Dr. Darielle Mason explains in detail how these pages epitomise the style of the artist Purkhu: https://www.forgelynch.com/_files/ugd/78856d_c289d21e51ba4a3f9f7b09d1e2f8b98c.pdf

THE ARTIST PURKHU

For a complete explanation of Goswamy’s reconstruction of Purkhu’s life and works, see “Purkhu of Kangra” in Goswamy & Fischer, 2011, pp. 719-732. Also see Goswamy & Fisher, 1992, pp. 367-387, especially pp.384 & 385.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Other folios from closely related *Ramayana* manuscripts, attributed to Purkhu, can be found in private and public collections including:

- (i) Museum of Fine Arts, Boston:
<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/149274>
- (ii) Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena:
See Pal, pp.58-59, no.22
<https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/P.2000.09.4>
- (iii) Rietberg Museum, Zürich
See Goswamy & Fischer 1992, pp.384-5, nos.168-169 and Britschgi and Fischer, p.27, no.1
<https://rietberg.ch/en/collections/2018-1247>
<https://rietberg.ch/en/collections/2008-1>

REFERENCES

- Animals, Birds and Portraits: Works on Paper from India and Persia*, exhibition catalogue, Oliver Forge & Brendan Lynch Ltd., Asia Week New York, 2025
- Britschgi, J. and Fischer, E., *Rama und Sita – Das Ramayana in der Malerei Indiens*, Zürich, 2008
- Goswamy, B.N. & and Fisher, E., *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India*, Zürich, 1992
- Goswamy, B.N., Beach, M.C. & and Fisher, E., eds., *Masters of Indian Painting, 1650-1900*, Zürich, 2011
- Pal, P., *Painted Poems: Rajput Paintings from the Ramesh and Urmil Kapoor Collection*, Los Angeles, 2004

N.P.

FOLIO FROM A RAMAYANA SERIES

32. RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS LEAVE FOR AYODHYA AFTER THEIR WEDDINGS

ATTRIBUTED TO PURKHU OF KANGRA
KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1800-15

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, blue margin with gilt foliate motifs, pink sprinkled border ruled in red, black and gold
9 1/4 by 13 1/2 in.; 24 by 34.5 cm. painting
11 by 15 1/2 in.; 28 by 38.6 cm. folio

This interesting geometric composition is typical of the period but, in the hands of the master artist Purku, it is full of fascinating and precise details. On the left the niched columnar interiors with rolled blinds, caged birds, embracing figures and food being served. On the right, a complicated overlapping of departing figures, those of rank to the fore, while above five ladies enveloped in burkas ride horses with buffalo, camels and calves preceding them.

Divided by a diagonal wall, this action-packed painting comprises two distinct zones: the ordered rooms and spaces of the palace on the left, dominated by women, and the tumult of a departing crowd on the right with animals, palanquins, musicians, and men on horseback proceeding away from the palace.

At the wedding contest for Sita, Rama successfully completes the allotted task and wins her hand. The two fathers then decide that Rama's brothers Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna should marry Sita's sister and two cousins. After the rituals are concluded, Rama, his father and brothers, the newly-wed princesses, and their entourage depart for Ayodhya.

In the painting, Rama – identified by a golden halo – and his three brothers are depicted four times in the palace, getting pampered and being made ready for their departure by royal women. The wedding festivities in Mithila are over and the princes will return to Ayodhya with their new brides. Clad in green, Janaka – shown three times – bids farewell to the princesses in the palace courtyard in the foreground. Moving outside the palace walls, the four brothers and their father Dasharatha take leave of Janaka before heading home.

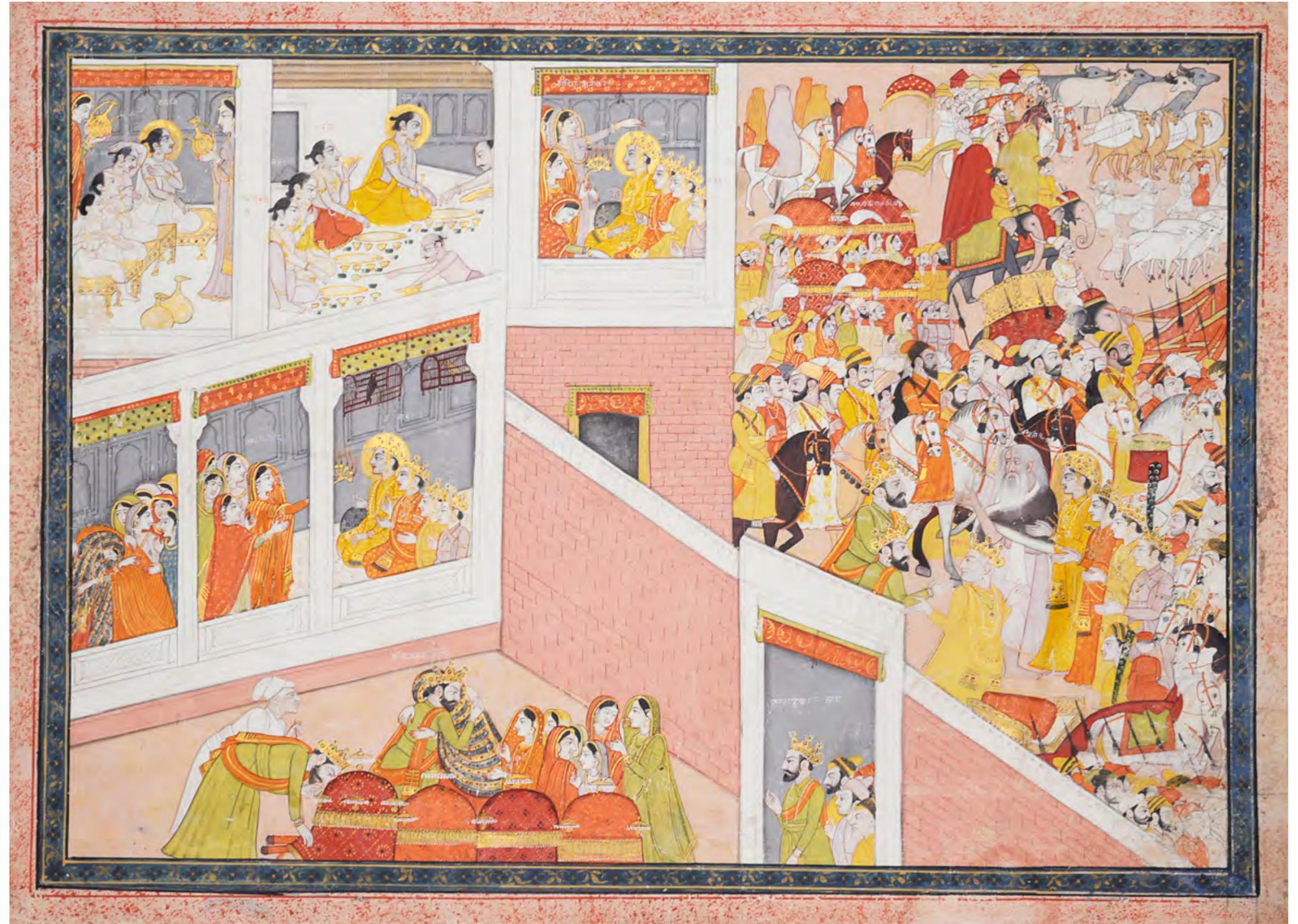
In this and the next two paintings, the artist brings together a number of consecutive moments from the narrative on the page, and portrays the protagonists multiple times.

INSCRIPTIONS

Recto: In white Devanagari, inscribed above the heads of the main characters identifying them, and, in a few instances, briefly describing what is painted.

PROVENANCE

Major R. W. Hingston (1887-1966)
By descent to Henry L. Hingston (1928-1998), Knightsbridge, London
Private collection, London, 1998-2011
By descent, private collection, Somerset, 2011-2024





FOLIO FROM A RAMAYANA SERIES

33. **MOURNING IN THE PALACE AT DASHARATHA'S DEATH AND BHARATA'S ANGER WHEN HE LEARNS HE IS TO BE KING**
ATTRIBUTED TO PURKHU OF KANGRA
KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1800-15

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, blue margin with gilt foliate motifs, pink sprinkled border ruled in red, black and gold
 9 3/4 by 13 3/4 in.; 24.5 by 35 cm. painting
 11 by 15 1/2 in.; 28 by 39 cm. folio

In this unusual and dramatic composition, even as the sun rises in the upper right corner, illuminating the palace in Ayodhya, the shadow of the events that have occurred at night darkens the lives of everyone.

Dasharatha's second wife Kaikeyi compels him to banish the crown prince Rama and make her son Bharata king. She is able to accomplish this on the strength of two boons Dasharatha had promised her for saving his life. The grief of parting from Rama after he is exiled kills Dasharatha. Bharata is away when all this transpires, and is furious with his mother upon his return.

A diagonal bisects the painting into night and day; under a starry sky on the left, Dasharatha dies in an upper chamber of the palace, and in a room below, is shrouded in a striped cloth and prepared for his death rituals by grief-stricken palace women. A messenger is sent to fetch Bharata and Shatrughna who return in the bottom right corner as the day dawns. The pair pay their respects to Kaikeyi and learn that Bharata is to be king. Enraged, Bharata drags by the hair his mother's conniving maid who bears responsibility for influencing Kaikeyi – this scene is shown in a courtyard near the upper right corner of the painting.

INSCRIPTIONS

Recto: In white Devanagari, inscriptions appear around the main male characters, identifying them.

Verso: In black, "16 Ayodhya" where Ayodhya signifies the first of seven books of the *Ramayana*.

PROVENANCE

Major R. W. Hingston (1887-1966)
 By descent to Henry L. Hingston (1928-1998), Knightsbridge, London
 Private collection, London, 1998-2011
 By descent, private collection, Somers, 2011-2024

FOLIO FROM A RAMAYANA SERIES

34. BHARATA CROSSES THE GANGES RIVER WITH HIS ENTOURAGE

ATTRIBUTED TO PURKHU OF KANGRA
KANGRA, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1800-15

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, blue margin with gilt foliate motifs, pink sprinkled border ruled in red, black and gold
9½ by 13½ in.; 24.1 by 34.6 cm. painting
11 by 15½ in.; 28cm. by 39cm. folio

In this dynamic composition, Bharata and his entourage cross the holy Ganges in boats as it forcefully courses down the painting. Some soldiers remain on the right bank, while many figures make their way to a location beyond the painting's left border.

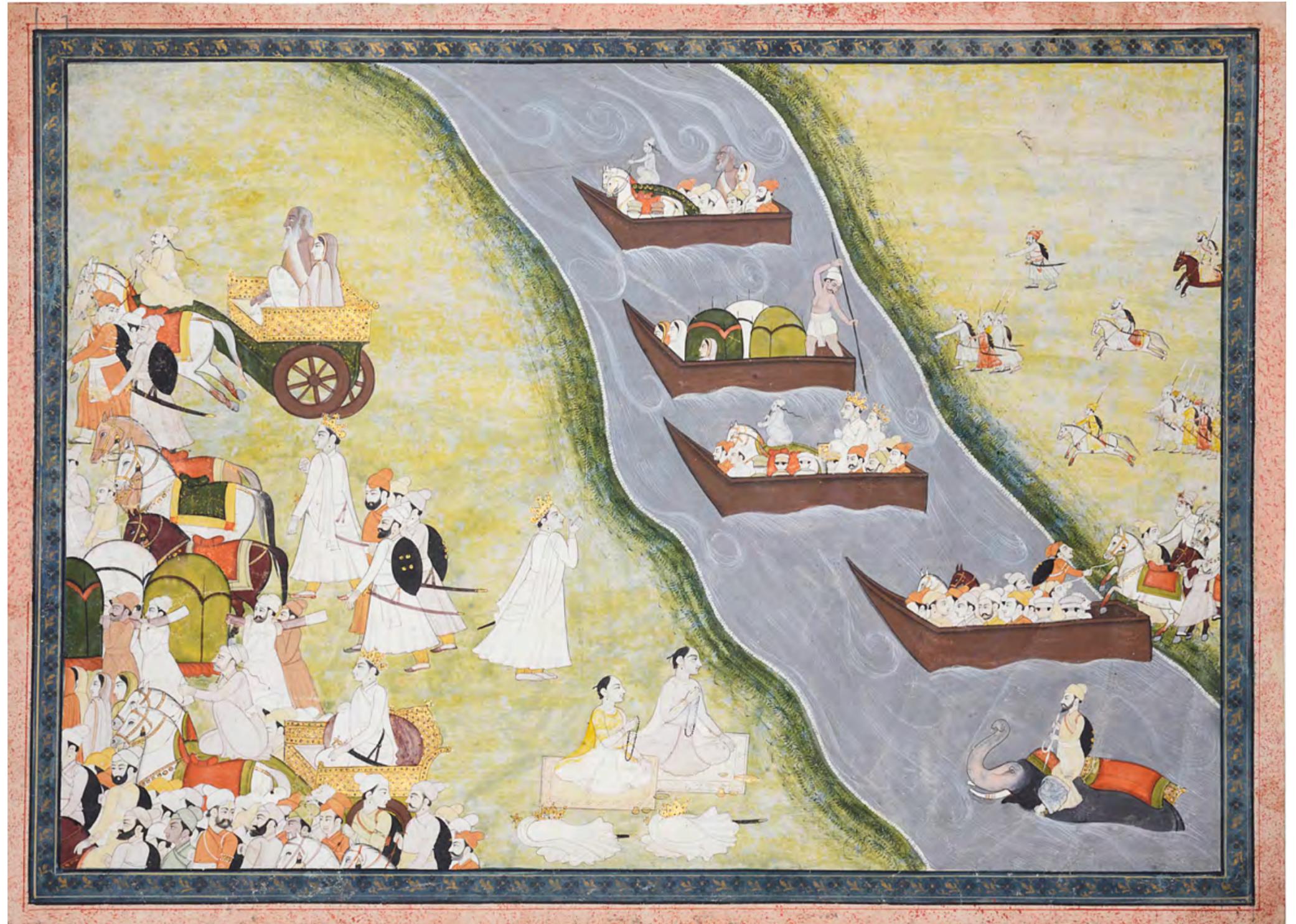
After Bharata hears that Rama has been banished, he resolves to bring his brother back and restore him to the throne. Together with Dasharatha's queens, the royal priest and a huge army, Bharata and Shatrughna set out to find Rama. Their journey brings them to the Ganges where they halt for the night.

The painting might portray the crossing of the Ganges on the way to Rama, or, while heading back to Ayodhya after Rama refuses to return. Boats journey across the stream carrying Bharata and Shatrughna in a chariot while another transports the queens in tented palanquins. On the left bank, the two brothers have removed their courtly vestments and sit on rugs in the centre foreground, likely offering prayers in memory of their deceased father. As the train makes its way left, Bharata (wearing a crown) turns around and folds his hands, perhaps in obeisance to the holy river or in thanks to Rama's friend Guha who helps with the crossing.

PROVENANCE

Major R. W. Hingston (1887-1966)
By descent to Henry L. Hingston (1928-1998), Knightsbridge, London
Private collection, London, 1998-2011
By descent, private collection, Somerset, 2011-24

N.P.





A PORTRAIT OF BHIM SINGH ATTRIBUTED TO CHOKHA

35. MAHARANA BHIM SINGH (1768-1828) WITH HIS MISTRESS ATTRIBUTED TO CHOKHA (1773-1828) UDAIPUR OR DEVGARH, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1810

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with black margin and double white rules with red border
7¼ by 5 in.; 20 by 12.7 cm. painting
9½ by 6½ in.; 24 by 16.9 cm. folio

In a landscape the Maharana and his mistress stand while a female attendant holds a *huqqa* from which the ruler is about to take a puff. Stout of body, he is dressed in a saffron *jama* with gold-fringed *patka* leaving his hirsute upper body uncovered, his matching turban embellished in gold, a blue gilt-edged halo behind. He wears necklaces thick with pearls and gems, two further large pearls form an earring, his right arm draws his mistress near. Dressed in a patterned red skirt with dark border, a gold *choli* and copious jewels, she touches the edge of her gold-edged *odhni* with her left hand. The female attendant is similarly dressed and all three stare vacantly ahead. In the upper border there is a suggestion of trees profiled against an evening sky and below them a nascent moon.

THE ARTIST CHOKHA

Son of the painter Bagra, Chokha was active in Udaipur from circa 1799-1811 and at Devgarh from 1811-1826. At the Mewar court his patron was Maharana Bhim Singh (r.1778-1828), "a man devoted to portraits of himself" (Beach 2011, p.733), but many of his paintings depict him in traditional royal roles from the bedroom to the hunting field. Chokha also painted the distinctive portraits of him, bearded and bare-chested, rejoicing in a certain corpulence and often staring into a mirror, that have come to epitomise his style. His style is further marked by elongated almond-shaped eyes and heavy beards with a distinctive palette, often employing predominant orange, saffron and red with the use of shading and stippling.

Exposed to different influences and subjects, a confident idiosyncratic style evolved and this was welcomed on his return to Devgarh in 1811-12, a small territory owing allegiance to Udaipur. Under the ruler Rawat Jaswant Singh, his work shows humour and skill in, for instance, his capturing of facial characteristics in the *darbar* scenes, see Beach 2011, p.748, figs.15, 16 & 18.

In his essay on the artist, Topsfield (pp.215-9) traces the chronology of his work at Udaipur. The works illustrated (in various collections) demonstrate the breadth and range of his style, and date from 1799 to 1824.

COMPARATIVE WORKS

The majority of other known works depict Bhim Singh:

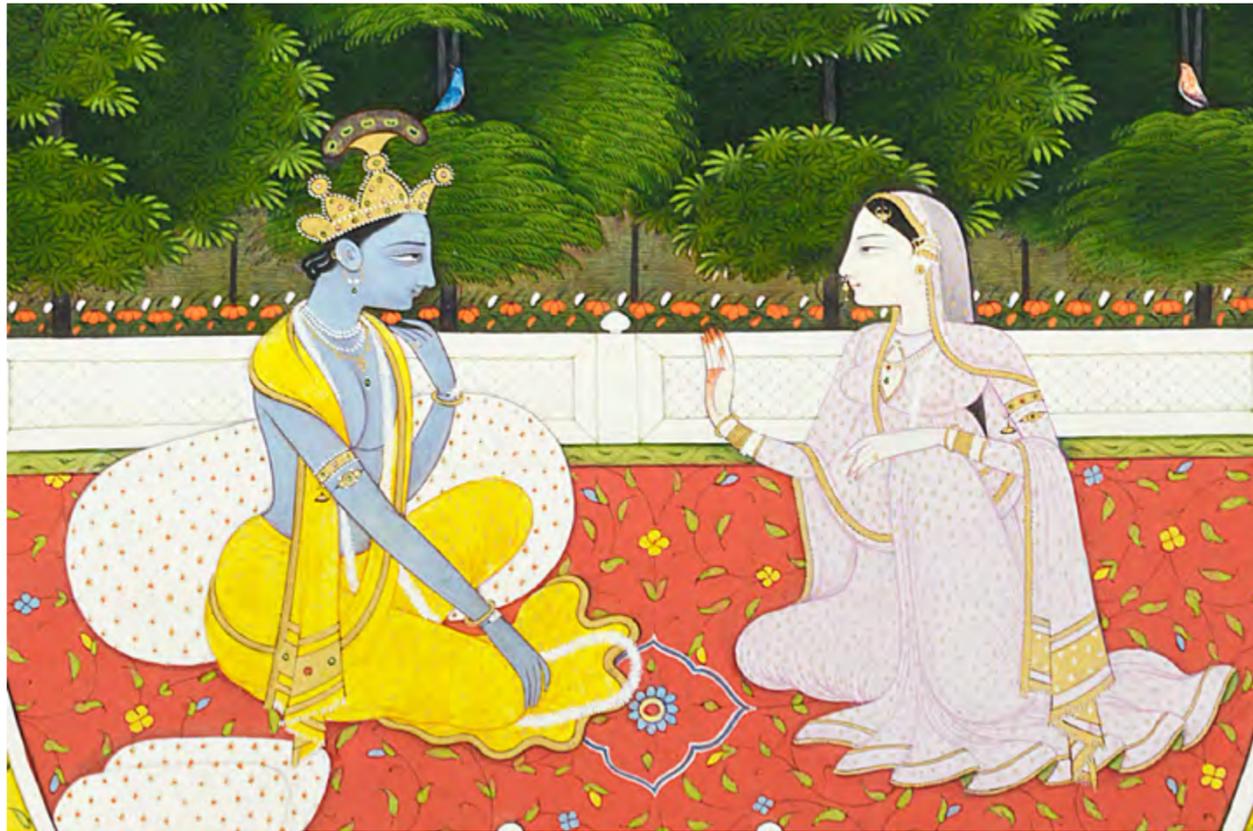
- (i) Two palace scenes depicting Bhim Singh, attributed to Chokha, circa 1810, are in the Sidhu Collection, Seattle and the Mittal Museum of Art, Hyderabad, see Beach & Singh, pp.78-79, nos. 91 & 92
- (ii) Two further paintings depicting Bhim Singh, in Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge and the Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C. are respectively attributed (1810) and deemed workshop of Chokha (1810-20), see Diamond & Khera, pp.128 & 135-7, nos.21 & 22
- (iii) Two portraits of Bhim Singh with a lady, 1803-05, are in the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Baroda and the Central Museum, Jaipur, see Topsfield, p.222, nos.198 & 199
- (iv) Bhim Singh being escorted to bed, attributed to Chokha, 1805-10, is in a private collection in London, see Topsfield, p.223, no.200

PROVENANCE

Private collection, England: Sotheby's, London, 17 June 1999, lot 46
Private collection, U.S.A.
Ramesh Kapoor Gallery, New York, 2015
Private collection, New York, 2015-26

REFERENCES

Beach, M.C. and Singh, *Rajasthani Painters Bagta and Chokha, Master Artists at Devgarh*, Zürich, 2005
Beach, M.C., 'Bagta and Chokha' in Beach, M.C., Fischer, E. & Goswamy, B.N., *Masters of Indian Painting*, vol.II, Zürich, 2011
Diamond, D. & Khera, D., *A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur*, Washington D.C., 2023
Topsfield, A., "Happiness amidst calamity: Bhim Singh and Chokha (1773-1828)" in Topsfield, A., *Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Zürich, 2002



36. KRISHNA AND RADHA IN A TRYST ON A VERDANT PALACE TERRACE
GARHWAL, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1820-30

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, set in an oval frame with yellow spandrels and a navy-ground floral border ruled in white
 9 by 5½ in.; 22.8 by 13.5 cm. painting
 11½ by 7½ in.; 29.4 by 20 cm. folio

In a lush landscape of forest, lake and hill villages on the mountains beyond, Krishna and Radha sit facing each other on a white marble palace terrace. Radha raises her right hand to restrain Krishna who seems about to place a necklace of jasmine around her neck, he is already wearing one. He in response is contrite, raising an elegant hand to his chin. Each of them wears pearl and gem-set gold jewellery and gold-edged clothing decorated with *chitta* motifs, Krishna in his distinctive crown and a vibrant yellow *dhoti* and shawl, his beloved in a pale pink ensemble with *odhni*, shawl and henna-tipped fingers.

In this powerful and overtly romantic work, the divine couple stare at each other with some intensity. A tranquil mood prevails, heightened by birdsong from the polychrome birds dotted about in the trees behind them. The artist has enlivened the normally subtle Kangra palette with a red carpet and yellow-ground spandrels painted with foliate spirals, creating a vibrant work in a celebration of the enduring romance of Krishna and Radha.

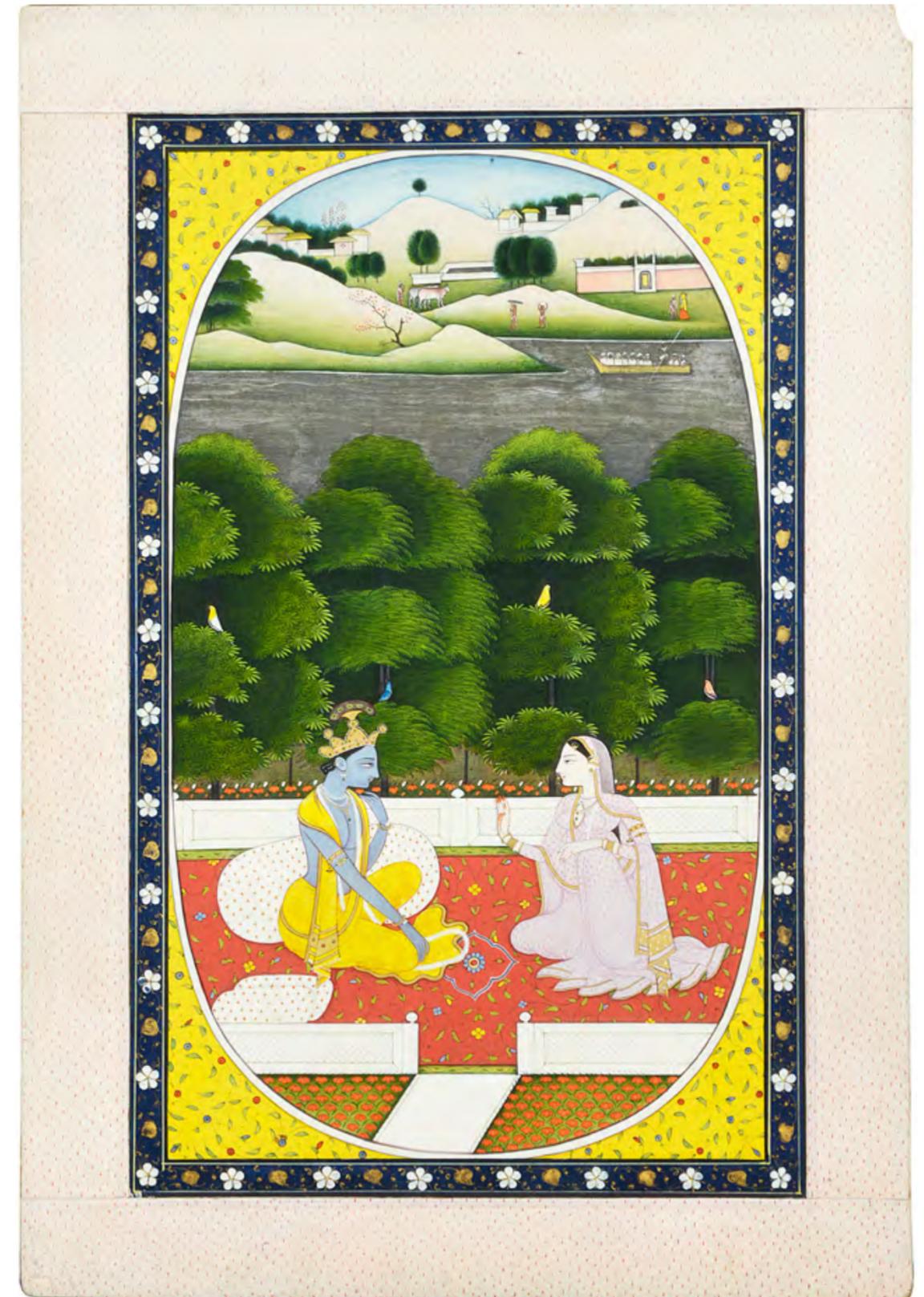
For comparable paintings, see Archer: Garhwal, nos.88-90.

PROVENANCE

Private collection, Germany
 With Sam Fogg, London, 2010
 Private collection, Belgium, 2010-15
 Private collection, Hong Kong, 2015-26

REFERENCES

Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973



FOLIO FROM A DISPERSED DEVI MAHATMYA SERIES

37. GREAT GODDESS DURGA AND KALI FACE THE DEMON ARMIES

GULER, PAHARI HILLS, CIRCA 1810-20

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, dark blue border, the cover sheet stamped with the purple ink Mandi royal inventory containing the number 371, above which is 33
4½ by 8½ in.; 13.9 by 20.9 cm. painting
6½ by 9 in.; 16.2 by 23 cm. folio

On a battlefield, with two finely detailed trees in the left foreground, two goddesses prepare to combat the vast demon horde amassed on the right. Against a vibrant palette, Kali exudes a palpable sense of demonic fury while Durga approaches with calm, single-minded determination.

The *Devi Mahatmya* recounts how the great goddess or Durga, created from the combined energies of the gods, vanquishes numerous demons. Incensed by various setbacks at the hands of the goddess, Shumbha, the lord of the demons, sends his vast armies, led by Chanda and Munda, to capture her. When the goddess sees the demon forces approaching, she frowns; Kali emerges from the goddess's forehead and destroys the entire host. As the slayer of Chanda and Munda, Kali is also known as Chamunda. Here in this work, Chanda and Munda sit in chariots and approach with their forces from the right. On the left is the eight-armed goddess, wearing her armour and mounted on her tiger. Between them stands the dreadful four-armed figure of Kali who is emaciated, with dishevelled hair, a furrowed brow and glaring eyes, wearing only a leopard skin, and carrying a noose, sword and part of a skeletal ribcage.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

For a related version of this scene, in a *Devi Mahatmya* manuscript of 1810, see Losty, no.32, where he also sets out his resumé of the chronology of the various known sets. Also see Aijazuddin, p.47, nos.41 (xv-xvii) for variations of this subject.

INSCRIPTIONS

On the cover sheet, the number 33 in Devanagari script is written twice, and the number 371 is written within the purple ink stamp. It is likely that 33 refers to the folio number.

PROVENANCE

Royal collection, Mandi, (inventory stamp on cover sheet)
Private collection, Germany, 1980s-90s
With Rob Dean, London, 2012
Private collection, USA, 2012-2025

REFERENCES

Aijazuddin, F.S., *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977
Archer, W.G., *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills: A Survey and History of Pahari Miniature Painting*, London and Delhi, 1973
Losty, J.P., *A Picture Book of the Devi Mahatmya*, London, 2016

N.P.



A MILITARY PORTRAIT ATTRIBUTED TO YELLAPAH

38. A SOWAR OF THE 2ND MADRAS LIGHT CAVALRY ATTRIBUTED TO YELLAPAH OF VELLORE COMPANY SCHOOL, TAMIL NADU, CIRCA 1835

Opaque pigments on paper
9¼ by 6 in.; 23.9 by 15.7 cm.

The cavalry officer stands bolt upright with a direct gaze, in full uniform, his gloved hands hanging pendent at either side, with handlebar moustache and scrolls of hair behind the ears. He stands in a landscape with a distant temple at the left, perhaps added by a European hand.

THE ARTIST YELLAPAH

The discovery of a named self-portrait in a Vellore album sold at Sotheby's, London, in 2013, enabled this remarkably skilled artist to be finally identified. See essay on the following pages and also Harris, pp. 118-125.

OTHER PORTRAITS OF SOWARS BY YELLAPAH

The National Army Museum, London, has nine watercolours attributed to Yellapah depicting similar subjects. Each depicts two or more figures, one of which is almost identical, both in physiognomy and uniform, to our example, inscribed 'Sowar, Madras Light Cavalry'. He reappears in another watercolour, depicting eight standing military figures, in the British Museum, see Harris, p.137, no.79. Other albums and works by the artist are in the Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Library, London.

PROVENANCE

W. Y. Carman, F.S.A., F.R. Hist. S., (1909-2003), a military historian, was a curator at the Imperial War Museum and later Deputy Director of the National Army Museum, London.
Private collection, Kent, 2020-25

PUBLISHED

W. Y. Carman, *Indian Army Uniforms*, London, 1961, pl.3b

REFERENCES

Sotheby's, 24 April 2013, lot 106:
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/arts-of-the-islamic-world-13220/lot.106.html>
Harris, L., "Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karraya and Yellapah of Vellore" in Dalrymple, W., ed., *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*, London, 2019
National Army Museum, London:
<https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1965-04-18-2>

continued...



We are grateful to Dr. Lucian Harris, author of “Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karraya and Yellapah of Vellore” in Dalrymple, W., ed., *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*, London, 2020, who has written the following essay on this work:

This fine painting of a *sowar* or cavalry soldier from the Madras Light Cavalry is a rare example of the work of Yellapah of Vellore and was likely painted around 1835. Until recently, the work of this artist remained anonymous despite the existence of examples in a number of collections. It was only with the appearance of a remarkable album at Sotheby’s, (London, 24 April 2013, lot 106) that it became possible to give this artist a name, due to the presence of a superb self-portrait showing him with two assistants (Harris, p.118); see below.

From the last few decades of the 18th century until around 1840, studies of Indian soldiers made by native artists became a staple of what would later become known as Company School painting. Along with depictions of Indian castes and occupations, such paintings were produced in quantity as souvenirs aimed at the British and Europeans stationed in India.

The evolution of these paintings showing native soldiers in uniform was largely centred around the Madras Presidency in south India. Many were of a simple bazaar quality, however Yellapah’s work in the genre, made in the late 1820s and 1830s, displayed vastly superior artistic techniques. He may well have been serving the same market but his most ambitious paintings were clearly aimed at more sophisticated patrons, some potentially local as well as foreign.

He produced numerous depictions of Indian soldiers, mainly drawn from regiments that served in and around the area of Vellore, in present-day Tamil Nadu, where he was based. Often these soldiers were depicted in rows with no painted background but with the details of their uniforms meticulously represented. Comparison of these paintings shows that he and his assistants were using stencils to copy these images of soldiers, a technique long familiar in India, adding different regimental uniforms accordingly and often changing the tone of their skin colour.



Self-portrait of the artist Yellapah. Courtesy of Sotheby’s.

This particular work by Yellapah is highly unusual in that it features a fine landscape background, possibly painted in a contemporary European hand, but clearly added after the soldier was completed. It was acquired from the estate of William Young Carman (1909-2003), the Canadian-born expert on military uniforms who became Deputy Director of the National Army Museum, London, in 1965. Carman published the painting in 1961 in his book *Indian Army Uniforms under the British: vol. 1, Cavalry*, both as a plate and on the spine of the dust jacket (Carman, col. pl. 3B).

Only two other works by Yellapah with similar backgrounds are known. These were gifted to the National Army Museum in London in 1960 by Cecil Constant Lawson (1880-1967), another expert on military uniforms who was also an artist and a nephew of Whistler.

There are other indications that at least some of the now dispersed Yellapah paintings were in one place, possibly collected in an album, until the middle decades of the 20th century. On the verso of one of the paintings given by Lawson to the N.A.M. is written: “to be copied by Mr Collis”. This same inscription also appears twice in the Yellapah material owned by the Victoria & Albert Museum. The museum acquired the majority of its albums of Yellapah paintings from Mr. G. Goolden who had inherited them from his uncle Richard Goolden (1895-1981), a prolific British actor. It is likely that the Yellapah paintings had passed down through the Goolden family. At least three generations of the family are recorded in Madras in the early to mid-19th century, including Mr Joseph Goolden who was a partner in the well-known Madras mercantile firm, Messrs Parry & Co., in 1842 and President of the Madras Chamber of Commerce in 1852.

There are a number of other paintings by Yellapah featuring an identical soldier in exactly the same uniform with its distinctive pale blue jacket and white trousers, usually in combination with other Madras regiments. In captioning the plate in his book, Carman mis-identifies the uniform as belonging to Bengal, however, it is most probably that of the 2nd regiment of the Madras Light Cavalry. The uniforms of the Madras Light Cavalry went through numerous changes during this period. Another version of the same image, in the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection at Brown University, Rhode Island, has an English inscription below it specifying it as belonging to the 6th regiment.

Lucian Harris, 2026

REFERENCES

Carman, W. Y., *Indian Army Uniforms*, London, 1961
Harris, L., “Yellapah of Vellore and Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karraya” in Dalrymple, W, ed, *Forgotten Masters: Indian painting for the East India Company*, London, 2019





FOLIO FROM A DISPERSED BARAMASA SERIES

**39. A PRINCELY COUPLE ON A GARDEN TERRACE IN THE SUMMER MONTH OF VAISAKHA
GARHWAL, PAHARI HILLS, 1820-30**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, blue margins ruled in white with a red border
9 by 5½ in.; 23.1 by 13.1 cm. painting
10¼ by 7 in.; 27.4 by 18 cm. folio

The Baramasa, or “Song of the Twelve Months,” is a pictorial and poetic genre composed by the poet Keshav Das. Each painting depicts a *nayika-nayaka* couple seated facing each other on a terrace in a landscape that changes with the seasons. This theme of the seasons has been celebrated in Indian poetry and painting for centuries, as well as in folk traditions. For further discussion see Randhawa, pp.131-46.

Here a couple in court dress, with more than a passing resemblance to Krishna and Radha, sit on a floral carpet on a palace terrace above an arcaded parapet. They are shaded by a tree full of birds including a swallow. The background landscape represents the agricultural activities corresponding to the summer season. In this instance, near a village on a hillside, two men are harvesting with scythes, two threshing with forks and above them a further two round up a group of bulls to carry the crops away. The scene is contained in an ovoid medallion with floral decoration in the white-ground spandrels.

Vaisakha, the first month of summer and the second month of the Hindu lunar year (April-May), is distinguished here by the slightly burnished trees, and the harvest commencing in the background, depicting the important grain harvest festival of Vaisakhi. See Randhawa (pp.135-136) for a comprehensive description of the month and p.137, fig. 80 for a similar scene.

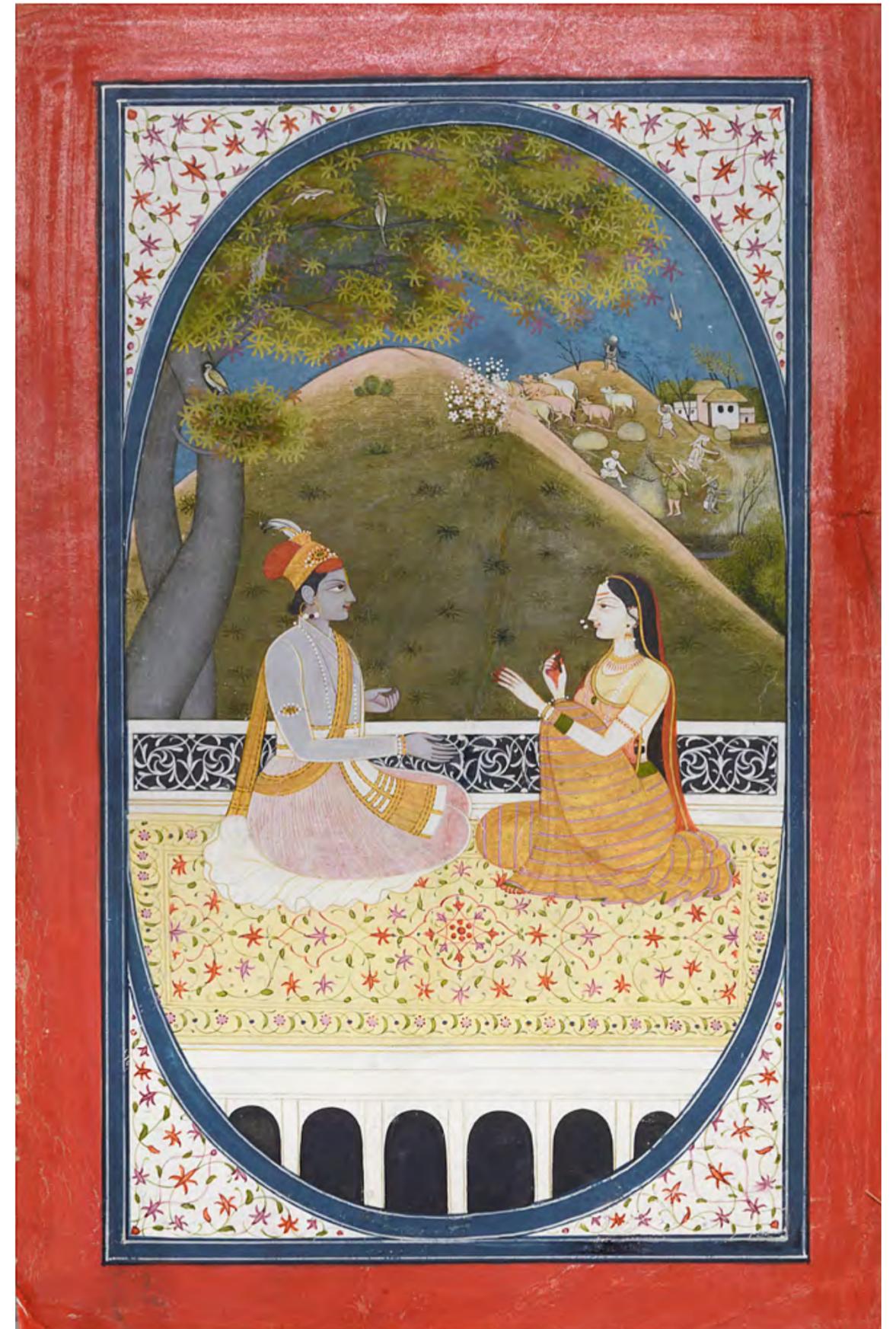
Another page from the same series, depicting Asvina, the month of autumn, circa 1820-30, was published by Galerie Soustiel, Paris, in 1973, see Soustiel, no 124.

PROVENANCE

With Joseph Soustiel, Paris, by 1973 (label on frame)
Private collection, France, 1970s-2025

REFERENCES

Randhawa, M.S., *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962
Soustiel, J., *Miniatures Orientales de L'Inde: Les Ecoles et Leurs Styles*, Paris, 14-25 May, 1973





**40. PORTRAIT OF PANDIT HARI NARAIN RAZDAN
COMPANY SCHOOL, LUCKNOW, DATED A.H. 1256 / 1840 A.D.**

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, yellow margin ruled in black with black border, inscribed in *nasta'liq*
6½ by 4¾ in.; 16.8 by 12.2 cm. painting
8 by 6 in.; 20.4 by 15.3 cm. folio

On a carpeted marble terrace the young man sits in a Regency-style chair with scroll handles, wearing wide-legged striped purple trousers under a white *angarkha* of fine *jamdani* cotton, with a side-opening at the chest. He gazes with wide eyes into the distance, his pale skin with pencil moustache, his black hair styled in a scroll at the nape of the neck. He wears gold-trimmed shoes, an elaborate gold brocade *chaugoshia* skull-cap, a necklace set with *goshwara* gems and two finger-rings, one ruby-set. In his right hand he holds a gilt-topped slender cane with attached tassel.

The fashion for wearing an *angarkha* of fine *jamdani* cotton, with a side-opening at the chest, was set by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (1822-87), eleventh ruler and last King of Awadh (r.1847-56). Despite the King's distinctively corpulent appearance, he was an enthusiastic patron of the arts and a poet, playwright and dancer himself. A generous patron, his court at Lucknow became a magnet for composers, musicians and artists. His own compositions and those of others at his court have had a lasting effect on the performing arts in India. However, his kingdom was annexed by the East India Company in 1856 and Wajid Ali Shah was exiled to Calcutta where he spent the rest of his days.

PANDIT HARI NARAIN RAZDAN

The name indicates a Kashmiri origin and such *pandits* were educated Hindu Brahmins who served as court officials. They were adept in Persian language and culture and were skilled calligraphers accomplished in *kitabāt*, the art of book-making. His pallid complexion, refined physiognomy, superb clothing and jewellery, as well as the setting all reinforce Pandit Hari's social eminence and that he was likely part of the court circle. The prolific Lucknow writer, Abdul Halmi Sharar (1860-1926), whose father was part of the court of Wajid Ali Shah, wrote many books chronicling court life at this period, see Sharar, pp. 60-75.

A handwritten manuscript on the history of the rulers of Awadh in India, up to the British annexation of 1856, was written in 1875 by Pandit Raj Narayan and is housed in the royal collection, Windsor Castle, inv. no. RCIN 1005028. It seems more than likely that the author is the same person as our sitter.

We are grateful to Dr. Anjan Chakraverty, of Banaras Hindu University, India, for his assistance in cataloguing this painting.

INSCRIPTIONS

Two short *nasta'liq* inscriptions run vertically on either side of the pierced marble railing:
shabih-i pandit har narain razdan / dar mah-i shawwal sana 1256 hijri tayyar shud
"Likeness of Pandit Har Narain Razdan. It was completed in the month of Shawwal of the Hijri year 1256" (1840 A.D.)

PROVENANCE

From the collection of a deceased scholar, Paris

REFERENCES

Sharar, A.H., *Lucknow: the Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, London, 1975



41. BURAQ AS A COMPOSITE ANIMAL
PERHAPS DELHI, CIRCA 1840

Opaque pigments with gold on paper, narrow black border
6 by 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; 15.4 by 19.8 cm.

In a landscape a composite quadruped with a woman's face looks directly at the viewer. She wears emerald, gold and pearl jewellery, a crescent on her forehead, her long black hair is surmounted by a crown composed of six birds. A pair of addorsed eagles sits below her head. Her body is composed of a royal elephant wearing a floral blanket, a camel, hare, tiger, fox, four large carp and a nude female figure. Her rear flank is a cheetah whose tail becomes a writhing dragon whose ferocious fangs are about to snare a tiger by its tail. Her legs are made of boar and bears, terminating in overlapping birds.

Buraq is the mythical human-faced quadruped that carries the Prophet Muhammed on a night journey (*Mi'raj*) through the heavens from Mecca to Jerusalem. It is depicted in Indian and Islamic paintings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The meaning or origin of such images is unclear. Topsfield (p.126) points to "themes of metamorphosis... and the fusion of animal and human forms in early Central Asian Animal Style art and in later Persian painting, as well as in Hindu mythology and folklore." He adds that the knotted dragon-like tail occurs in Islamic astronomical or astrological imagery. Also see Del Bonta, pp.69-82 for an article on composite animal painting.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

Various other examples of composite figures of Buraq are known:

- (i) Buraq led by a *div*, Chamba, circa 1710, in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, see Seyller, p.66, no.3
- (ii) Buraq, Golconda, circa 1670, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, see Seyller, p.66, no.4
- (iii) Buraq and a *div*, Mughal India, 17/18th century, Bodleian Library, Oxford, see Topsfield, pp.126-7, no.59
- (iv) Buraq, Mughal India, 1750-1800, Bonhams, London, 23 October 2018, lot 108

PROVENANCE

John (1928-2024) and Berthe Gilmore Ford, Baltimore
Private collection, New York, 2012-26

REFERENCES

- Del Bonta, R.J., "Reinventing Nature: Mughal Composite Animal Painting, in Verma, S.P., *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art*, Bombay, 1999
- Seyller, J., "Deccani Elements in Early Pahari Painting", in Haidar, N.N. and Sardar, M., *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, New York, 2008
- Topsfield, A., *Paintings from Mughal India*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 2008



A ROYAL PORTRAIT BY AQA BURZURG SHIRAZI

42. PORTRAIT OF CROWN PRINCE NASIR AL-DIN MIRZA

BY AQA BUZURG SHIRAZI (fl.1840-60)
QAJAR PERSIA, DATED A.H. 1262 / 1846 A.D.

Opaque pigments with gold on paper
14 by 8 in.; 35.5 by 20.5 cm. painting
14½ by 8½ in.; 37 by 22 cm. folio

SUBJECT

Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-96) was the fourth Qajar Shah of Iran (r.1848-96). He modernised the country with advances in education and by introducing the telegraph, newspapers, photography and the railways. He was also the first shah to visit Europe. However, Naser developed a dictatorial manner and, confined by a small army, he was unable to control revolts over tax reforms and the power of the tribal and religious leaders. He was assassinated while praying at the Abdol-Azimin Shrine in Rey, near Teheran, in 1896.

THE ARTIST

For two portraits by Aqa Buzurg Shirazi, a watercolour portrait of Mihr 'Ali Khan Shuja' al-Mulk, dated A.H.1273/1857 A.D., in a private collection, and an oil on canvas depicting Mirza Aqa Khan, dated A.H.1284/1867-8 A.D., in the Soudavar Collection, see Maury, pp.238-9, fig.1, 233.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

A similar portrait by the same artist is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York:
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/452801>

INSCRIPTIONS

tasvir-i mubarak-i sarkar navvab-i ashraf-i vala nasir al-din mirza vali'ahd-i dawlat-i abad muddat-i bahir[a]-i qahira

“Blessed painting of the commander, the most honourable, exalted deputy, Nasir al-Din Mirza, Crown Prince of the eternal, superior, victorious state.”

A signature reads:

raqam-i kamtarin banda-i dargah-i hazrat-i shahanshahi aqa buzurg shirazi fi shahr rabi'al-awwal 1262

“Drawing of the lowliest slave of the court of His Royal Majesty, Aqa Buzurg Shirazi, in the month of Rabi’al-Awwal 1262 (1846).”

PROVENANCE

Joseph Naus (1849-1920), Brussels
By descent, private collection, Belgium, to 2025

Joseph Henri Naus was a Belgian national who travelled to Tehran in 1898 as part of a trade delegation. Having helped to increase customs revenues substantially, within a year, he was subsequently appointed by Muzaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar (r.1896-1907), to various government posts, becoming head of the treasury, customs, taxation, postal services and security. He left Iran in 1907.

REFERENCES

Maury, C., “Aqa Buzurg Shirazi” in Fellingner, G. & Guillaume, C., *L’Empire des roses: Chefs-d’oeuvre de l’art persan due XIXe siècle*, Lens, 2018



43. PORTRAIT OF NASIR AL-DIN SHAH (1831-96)
QAJAR PERSIA, CIRCA 1860-80

Gouache with gold on paper
12½ by 8½ in.; 32.5 by 20.8 cm. painting
13½ by 8½ in.; 34.4 by 22.6 cm. folio

The portrait appears to be one of several copies of the original, by Khanehzadeh Isma'il, also known as Muhammad Isma'il, painted in 1854. Nasir al-Din Shah (r.1848-96) visited Europe three times and became very interested in photography, taking it up as a hobby (see Helbig, pp.390-401). He was in fact photographed in the coat he is wearing here in the early 1850s. For a discussion of portraiture under Nasir al-Din Shah, see Diba & Ektiar, pp. 239-267.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

The original portrait, dated A.H. 1270 / 1853-54 A.D., by Khanehzadeh Isma'il, (also known as Muhammad Isma'il), a celebrated mid-nineteenth century portraitist and lacquer painter, is in the British Museum, London: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1947-0210-0-1
Several court artists are known to have copied it, including Muhammad Isfahani, whose version in the British Library, London, is dated A.H.1272/1856 A.D., see Curtis et al., pp.268-9, no.200.

PROVENANCE

Joseph Naus (1849-1920), Brussels; for a biographical note see previous item, no.42.
By descent, private collection, Belgium, to 2025

REFERENCES

Curtis, J., Sandmann, I. & Stanley, T., *Epic Iran: 5000 Years of Culture*, London, 2021
Diba, L. and Ekhtiar, M., *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925*, New York, 1998
Helbig, E., "Edification d'un pouvoir, composition d'une histoire: L'héritage photographique de l'époque qajare" in Fellingner, G. and Guillaume, C., *L'Empire des roses: Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art persan du XIXe siècle*, Lens, 2018



44. **PORTRAIT OF TWO BOYS
EKLING OF NATHDWARA**
NATHDWARA, RAJASTHAN, CIRCA 1900

Gouache with gold on paper, inscribed in white Devanagari at centre left with the artist's name
29 1/4 by 23 1/4 in.; 74 by 58.7 cm. framed and glazed

The two young boys are depicted photographically and seem terrified by the process, or bored by the length of time it is taking. Though set against a palatial background the boys are clearly not princes, as indicated by their clothing and the slatted wood chairs they sit upon. The younger wears a pillar-box hat and European style suit and shoes, the elder is traditionally dressed in green turban and white *dhoti*, a floral shawl crumpled on his lap, except for his blue jacket and shoes which are Western. Each holds a posy of flowers and wears necklaces, earrings and a bangle. Each has a red *bindi* on the forehead and the elder boy also has a *tilak*, a smear of sandalwood below the eye-brows indicating that he is a Hindu devotee.

PAINTING AT NATHDWARA

The painters of Nathdwara have long been established as providing pictures, on paper and on cloth (*pichhwai*), for pilgrims to the city, famous amongst Hindus for the location of the Vaishnavite shrine to the god Shrinathji, which depicts Krishna as a seven year old boy. The shrine was founded when an ancient black stone image of the god was moved in 1672, from its original site near Mathura to Nathdwara. Most Nathdwara paintings date from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. However, following the introduction of photography to India in the mid nineteenth century, painters in Rajasthan began to absorb its influence and this led them to develop a style which could compete with the

new photographic studios. Both over-painted photographs were produced and also paintings, such as this, which created the effect of a photograph but in polychrome. For a Nathdwara painted portrait and further information see Dewan, p.20, no.1.5 and pp.15-35.

COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES

It appears the artist was called Ekling Ganesa, a Shaivite name, and the inscriptions would likely have been added to the work for the artist (or studio) by a scribe. The head priest (*tilkayat*) of the Shri Nathji Temple at Nathdwara at this time would have been Tilkayat Govardhanlalji Maharaj (1862-1934). Few works were signed by their artists prior to the late nineteenth century.

A watercolour portrait of Goswami, a high priest, circa 1900, also inscribed in white Devanagari to the same artist, is in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, see Dewan, p.57, no.13

INSCRIPTIONS

Shri Nathdwara chitara Ekling [II] Ganesa
'Artist Ekling of Nathdwara'

PROVENANCE

Christie's, South Kensington, London, 14 October 2005, lot 358
Private collection, London, 2005-25

REFERENCES

Dewan, D. and Zotova, O., *Embellished Reality: Indian Painted Photographs*, Toronto, 2012



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