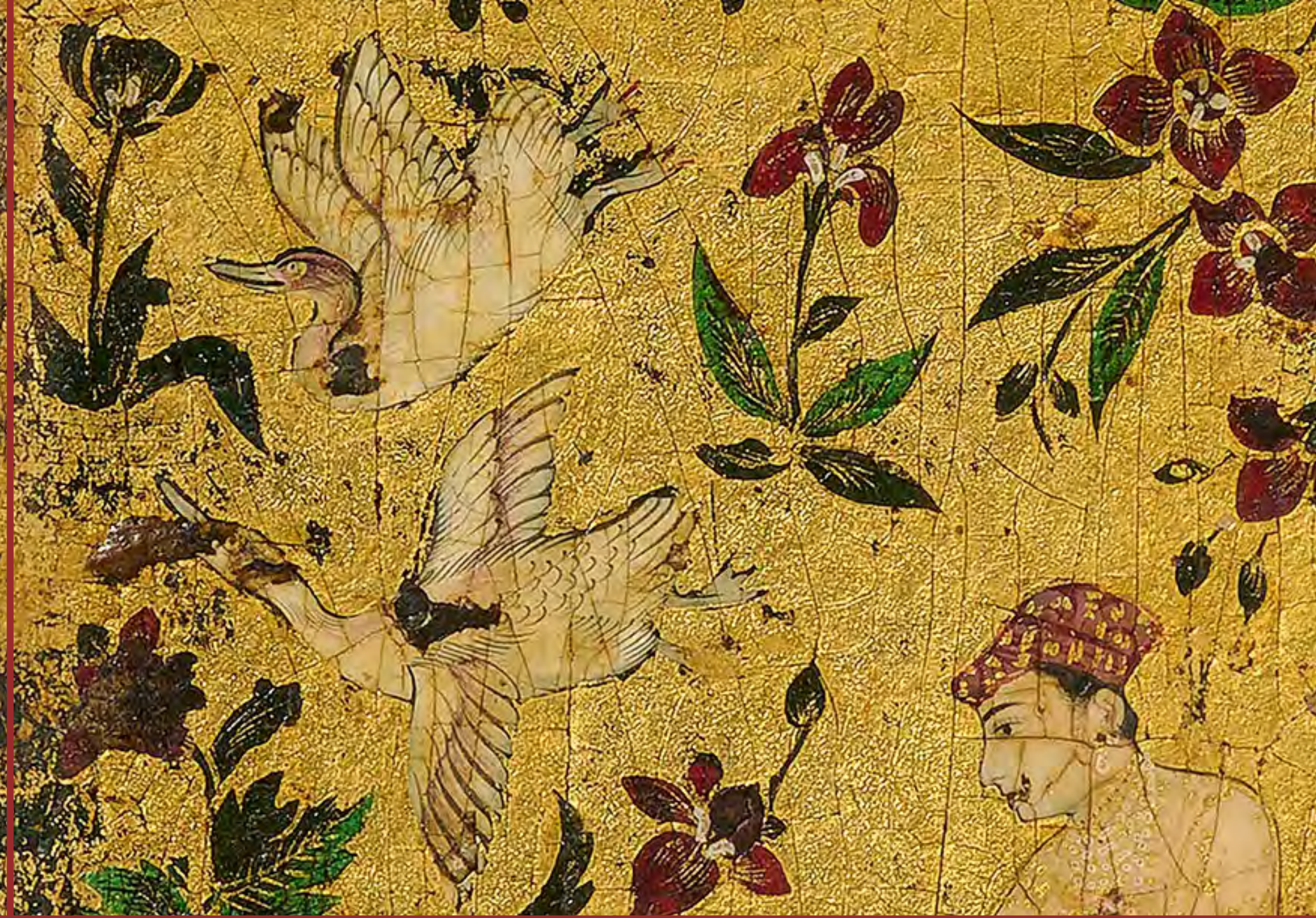
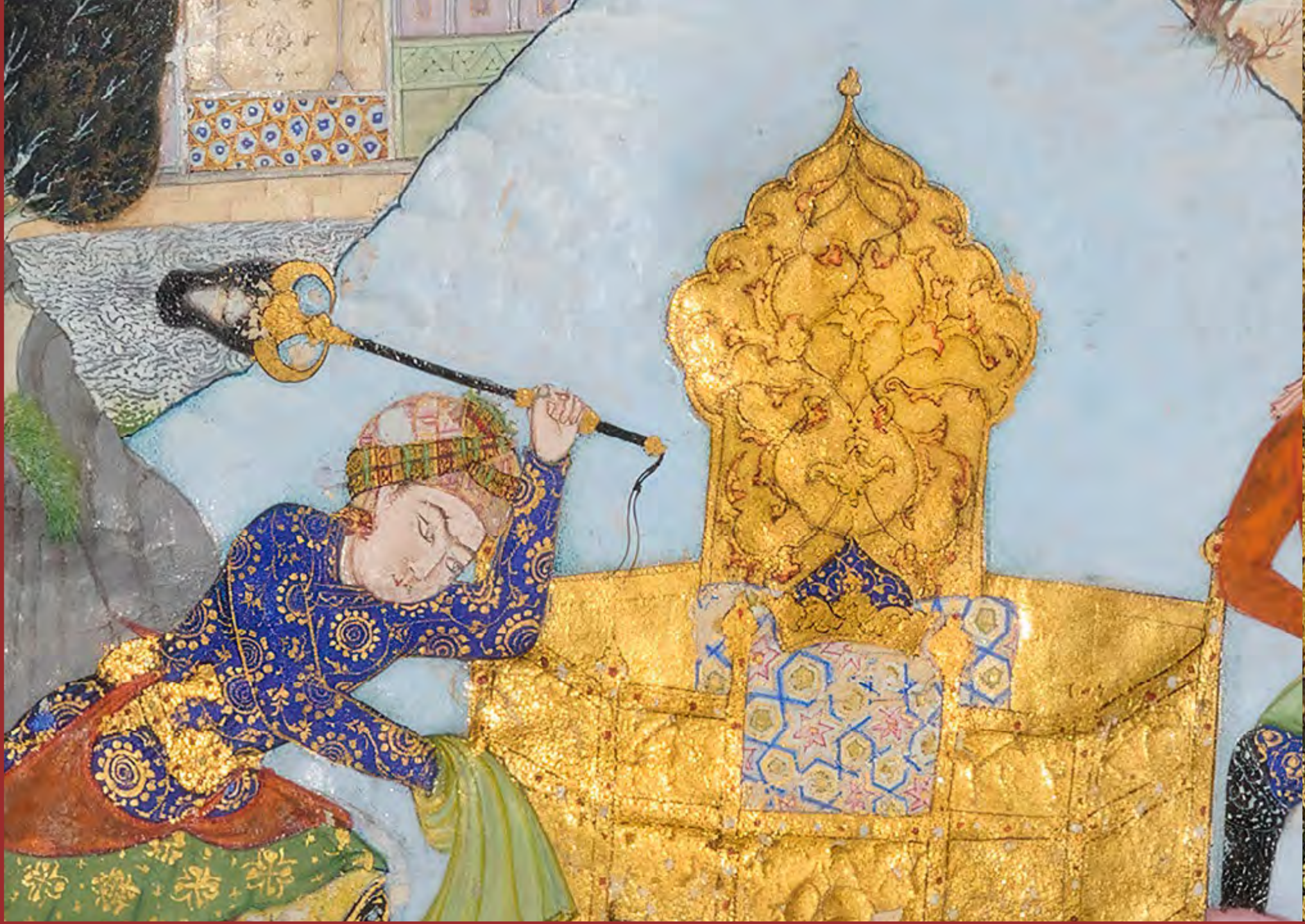


INDIA'S FASCINATION
WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

Mughal, Rajput and Company School Paintings

FRANCESCA GALLOWAY



In 1621 a zebra from eastern Africa was presented to the emperor Jahangir, who had never seen an animal like this and thought his coat had been painted. But 'after inspection it was clear that that was how God had made it' (Jahangirnama – Memoirs of Jahangir Emperor of India). And so he had his master artist Mansur paint this zebra. This painting is currently on display in The Great Mughals exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (November 2024 – May 2025). Our Mughal zebra (cat. 3) is of a similar date but by a different hand. Such paintings are extremely rare and important because they illustrate Imperial fascination with the wider natural world including animals that were not indigenous to India, like red squirrels, turkeys, ostriches and, in our case, a zebra. The painting is discussed and put into context in John Seyller's essay.

A late 16th century Mughal portrait of a caparisoned horse with its three grooms, in spectacular condition (cat. 1), has a most unusual background, which evokes a Rothko painting. This miniature was once in the Imperial Mughal library, confirmed by numerous 17th century seals and inscriptions on the verso. The highly influential Mughal courtier, Asaf Khan, 'borrowed' this painting during his lifetime. Of Persian origin, he became prime minister to Jahangir and later to Shah Jahan, and his daughter, Mumtaz Mahal, the beloved wife of Shah Jahan. The Taj Mahal was built by the Emperor in her memory.

India's natural world also enchanted foreigners who spent time in this country. Foremost amongst these was Lady Impey who commissioned master artists, trained in the naturalistic Mughal tradition, to depict the animals in her Calcutta menagerie. In Indian art the Impey series of natural history drawings are considered the finest of their kind. Our notoriously cheerful and cheeky Lorikeet is from Lady Impey's collection (cat. 16). The Rainbow Lorikeet are native to Australia but are also to be found in India.

A focus on the role of women in Mughal society is another theme of this exhibition. A rare and intriguing lacquered panel (cat. 4), once part of a luxurious casket, would appear to have been made for a courtly lady because all the scenes are centred around women. Our panel depicts a lively, courtly hunting scene with bejewelled hunters, mostly women or men with feminine attributes. Molly Aitken in her text fleshes out some of the more subtle roles of women in this society.

Two 18th century Awadh album pages from the period of Shuja' al-Dawla also revolve around women at the Mughal court (cats.7 and 8).

We would like to thank John Seyller and Molly Aitken for their valuable contribution to this catalogue. We are grateful to the late J.P. Losty, Malini Roy, Friederike Weis, Andrew Topsfield, Charles Greig, Qaisra Khan, Will Kwiatkowski, Helen Loveday, Adrian Plau, Nicholas Shaw and Richard Valentia. We are always grateful to Misha Anikst for his design and to Thea Buen, Christine Ramphal and Danielle Beilby for their contribution to this publication.

Francesca Galloway

February 2025

A Farrier Shoeing a Royal Horse

Mughal, attributed to Mukhlis, c. 1585

Opaque pigments with gold on paper

Folio 19.9 × 27 cm; painting 16.3 × 23.5 cm

Laid down between gold, black and blues rules and plain paper margins; black ink inscriptions in the upper and lower margin; the reverse with Mughal Royal Library inspection notes, ownership seals and further inscriptions in black and red ink

Provenance

Mughal library notes, from Jahangir's reign:

Inspected in the month of Khurdad in regnal year 8 (1613) and on 20 Shahriwar of regnal year 10 (1615)

Mughal library notes, from Shah Jahan's reign:

Recorded as re-entering the Mughal collection from the possession of 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-khanan and entrusted to the care of Muhammad Sharif, 5 Ramadan regnal year 15 (1641)

Entrusted to the care of Shams al-Din, 21 Sha'ban of regnal year 18 (1644)

Inspected on 22 Rabi' al-Thani of regnal year 24 (1651)

Entrusted to the care of La'l on 2 Dhu'l-Hijja of regnal year 29 (1655)

Mughal library notes, from Aurangzeb's reign:

Inspected on 22 Rajab 1069 (1659), accompanied by the seal impression of 'Azizullah, using a Shah Jahani epithet

Seal impression of Sayyid 'Ali al-Husayni dated AH 1075/1664–65 AD

Entrusted to the care of Muzaffar, librarian to Aurangzeb, on 2 Safar of regnal year 17 (1674)

Mewari Royal inventory number 24/59 and note dated AH 1111/1699–1700 AD

Jaleh Khosrovani-Diba collection (sold at Sotheby's London, 19 October 2016, lot 10)

Most equine portraits in Indian painting focus primarily on the horse's stately proportions and attractive colouring, but sometimes give almost as much due to its majestic caparison and trappings. If a groom is present, he typically stands dutifully before the creature and effectively constitutes only a peripheral part of the scene. In the present work, by contrast, the artist nominally emphasises the trio of figures actively attending the horse, even allowing them to obscure parts of the horse itself. Charged with the responsibility of steadying the horse, one attendant firmly grips the reins near the golden bridle and glances over cautiously at his companions engaged in shoeing the hoof of the creature's front leg. One smaller stable hand, his eyes gazing outward, has slipped a looped cord round the horse's raised foreleg and tugs on it to keep it raised knee-high. The other, evidently the more skilled farrier, squats as he hammers golden horseshoe nails into a new white horseshoe. No other tools normally used in the process - nippers, rasp, anvil, and additional iron horseshoes - are laid out on the ground, as they are in most other versions of the same scene.¹





Conversely, considerable visual interest is lavished on the horse's tack. A black aigrette headpiece secured by a golden chain adorned with a tiger's tooth or claw is a sure indication of the horse's status as a royal mount. A broad white girth with lovely geometric patterns holds the *numnah* in place. And two saddle cloths, a plain green one overlaid with a black one featuring elaborate floral scrollwork, cover much of the equine body. A large portion of the latter cloth is turned up and tucked under the girth, a conceit used to showcase the artist's ability to model its orange lining in a conspicuously European-inspired manner.

The painting can be attributed definitively to Mukhlis, a quirky painter active in the later stages of the *Hamzanama*, c. 1557–72 up to an ascribed set of border designs in the Bodleian Library's *Baharistan*, 1595.² In the *Hamzanama*, works attributed to Mukhlis are distinguished by his figures' peculiar, almond-shaped eyes, the schematic modelling of their clothing, and especially by the florid architectural detailing.³ These attributed paintings are complemented by firmly ascribed ones from the British Library *Darabnama*, c. 1577–80 (Or. 4615, ff. 76b, 78b, and 82b), the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library *Tarikh-i khandan-i Timuriyya*, c. 1584–85 (ff. 66a and 138b), and the British Library *Baburnama*, c. 1591 (Or. 3714, f. 285a) (figs. 1–2). All these illustrations share a common set of figure types, modelling conventions, and palette, with the last of these notably including orange and green in juxtaposition. The lively painterly treatment of the dark green sward below occurs in several *Darabnama* paintings by Mukhlis, and the strikingly unusual mustard yellow zone he introduces immediately above it here is repeated in a painting ascribed to him as well (in a painting designed by Kanha) in the Victoria & Albert Museum *Akbarnama*, c. 1586–87 (IS.2:97–1896) (fig. 3). Like most Mughal artists, Mukhlis honed his technical skill over the course of his career so that his faces and other forms became generally tighter or more refined, as a comparison of his work in the *Darabnama* and *Baburnama* would demonstrate. This widespread tendency suggests a date of c. 1585 for this work.

This individual painting is one of several dozen Mughal specimens bearing a wealth of interesting inspection notes and seals; most annotations were made by imperial librarians, but two are by later librarians at the Rajasthani court of Mewar, probably as part of a royal gift about 1700. In the upper and lower borders of the painted side of the folio are valuations of ten, two, and three rupees, documenting a reasonably narrow range of estimated value over time. On the folio's reverse are notes and seals of a series of well-known Mughal librarians, almost all of whom were active during the reign of Emperor Shahjahan (r. 1627–58). Two are dated AH 1069 and AH 1075, demonstrating that the regular practice of conducting an inventory of individual paintings extended into 'Alamgir's reign, though at a much-reduced pace.

One particularly interesting bit of information in note 12 on the annotated photograph (see illustration of verso) is that the painting was once the property of Asaf Khan, whose title of *Khankhanan* (commander-in-chief) has led some to misidentify the person as his more famous predecessor with the same title, 'Abd al-Rahim (d. 1 October 1627). Asaf Khan, however, held that title from 1628 to his death on 12 June 1641, when his property subsequently reverted to the crown. Asaf Khan enjoyed



above
Fig. 1 Baburnama, c. 1591, British Library
(Or.3714, f. 285a)



above right
Fig. 2 Baburnama, detail



right
Fig. 3 Akbarnama, c. 1586–87, Victoria & Albert
Museum (IS.2:97-1896)

great favour in his own right, in large part because of his connections to the royal family – he was no less than the brother of Empress Nur Jahan and father of Empress Mumtaz Mahal. Such a note is valuable evidence that various members of the royal family and Mughal nobility also owned paintings, some made well before their time.

Translation of text on the verso of the painting:

1. On 2 Zi'l-Hijja RY (regnal year) 29 entrusted to La'lchand [1655].
 2. Small circular seal of the Jahangir or Shahjahan period.
 3. Inspected on 2 Khurdad RY 8 [1635].
 4. Inspected on AH 22 Rajab 1069 [4 April 1659 CE].
 5. Devanagari inscription *dali ra tare pasyata re ghero jare nal badame khandeha*. The approximate substance of the first part of this is 'the horse (ghoro) of the Delhi *padshah*'; the remainder is undeciphered.
 6. Oval seal with legend: '*abduhu latif al-Husayni* AH 1[0]43 [1633-34 CE].
 7. Inspected on the 20th of the month of Shawwal RY 10.
 8. Seal of Sayyid 'Ali al-Husayni murid-i 'Alamgir Padshah RY 8, AH 1075 [1664-65 CE].
 9. Undeciphered seal dated AH 1051 [1641-42 CE].
 10. Seal of Ahmad Shahid *murid ba Ikhlas-i padshah-i jahan* RY 18, AH 1054 [1644-45 CE].
 11. Illegible oval seal.
 12. On 5 Ramadan RY 15 [1642 CE] [it was] entrusted to Muhammad Sharif. Property of Asaf Khan Khankhanan. Finis.
 13. Inspected on AH 22 Rabi' II RY 24 [1650].
 14. Inspected on 21st of the month of Sha'ban RY 18 and entrusted to Shams, worthy of.
 15. On the date of the 3rd of the month of Safar RY 17 it was ordered transferred to Muzaffar.
- Qimat* (valuation).
16. Occurrence (*waqi'a*).
 17. *arz to 26 Zi'l-Hijja s[ana]* [AH] 1111 [4 June 1700 CE] *ki[mat]* [Amber inspection note in Persian language but written in Devanagari script]. *Ki[mat]* 10 (overwritten to this number) [rupees].

- 1 Amongst the copies of this horseshoeing scene are a drawing in reverse attributed here to Ikhlas in the British Museum (1942,0214,0.1); a work offered at Sotheby's 23 October 2024, lot 85; an Allahabad-period painting attributed to Salim Quli formerly in the Eskanazi collection, and a slightly different early 17th-century horseshoeing scene signed by the Bijapuri artist 'Ali Ja'far in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.
- 2 Bodleian Library Baharistan MS. Elliott, f. 54b. For other works ascribed or attributed to Mukhlis, see Verma, S.P., *Mughal Painters and Their Work*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, pp. 303-304.
- 3 Seyller, J., et al., *The Adventures of Hamza*, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 2002, nos. 22, 34, 38, 41, 58, 62, 64, 66, 68, 73, and 81.



Verso: Annotations on the verso of the painting

Bahram Gur Kills a Pair of Lions to Win the Crown Folio from a Dispersed *Shahnama* Manuscript

Mughal, attributed to Mirza Ghulam, c. 1610

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 38.2 × 22.7 cm; painting 10.2 × 13 cm

Text above and below the painting written in nasta'liq in black ink in four columns on gold-sprinkled paper, inner margins ruled in gold and blue; verso with 25 lines to the page, later floral illuminated margins laid down over plain original folio, the name 'Mirza Ghulam' discernible in the lower margin

In this illustration from a dispersed copy of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings), the national epic of ancient Iran completed by the poet Firdausi in 1010 CE, the Sasanian king Bahram Gur (r. 420–438) acts boldly to ascend the throne. Denied his rightful succession, Bahram Gur poses a challenge to all claimants: whoever manages to snatch the crown placed between two fierce lions will be named king. Bahram himself quickly slays the beasts, seizes the crown, and places it upon his own head. The artist depicts the hero striding forward as he wields his legendary ox-headed mace against the pair of lions; one has already been felled bloodlessly whilst the other bares his teeth and actively lunges forward to meet his end. The prize of the contest – the crown, a symbol of the right to rule – appears conspicuously on a cushion in the middle of the hexagonal golden throne. The exquisite throne back is isolated in turn against a luminous pastel-blue hillock outlined with a wiry line. Beyond the source of the stream that passes through a schematic polylobed mountain on its way to the foreground is an ethereal cityscape whose lofty conical domes alternate with a series of pale spade-shaped trees. The painter fills the corresponding area to the right of the throne and hillock with a trio of figures, one pulling his sword from its scabbard and the other two clambering up the hill. The stepped painting field is a feature found in every known illustration from this manuscript and indeed in many *Shahnama* manuscripts made for subimperial patrons.

Unlike most other detached illustrations from this *Shahnama* manuscript, this example's ascription in the lower or outer margin is hidden by the later addition of borders illuminated with delicate golden flowers.¹ Nonetheless, it is readily attributed to Mirza Ghulam, who contributed at least two other paintings to the manuscript.² His handiwork is instantly recognisable here in the faces of the male and female on the right, which have the familiar combination of Persian-style bow-shaped eyebrows, slanted eyes and puckered lips. To judge from the highly Persianate nature of his style, Mirza Ghulam's career probably began under the sway of Aqa Riza, a Persian artist who entered Mughal service as early as 1588 and was an aesthetic force in Prince Salim's atelier in Allahabad from 1600 to 1604. Mirza Ghulam's style is characterised by works from this time. Ascriptions on several independent paintings ascribed to Mirza Ghulam connect an abbreviated form of his name (Ghulam, or 'slave') with that of his patron, Shah Salim. Four ascribed paintings in an *Anwar-i Suhayli* manuscript produced in 1604,³ and five attributed ones in a *Diwan* of Amir Hasan dated 1602 provide a clear view of



the artist's idiosyncratic style.⁴ Mirza Ghulam returned to the Mughal court with Salim's coterie of artists, as is evident from a firmly attributed painting in a *Bustan* of Sa'di dated 1605–06.⁵ After that, he resurfaces only in this manuscript and then disappears from the annals of art history.

The limited roster of known artists active in this *Shahnama* manuscript had one thing in common: minimal prior experience in the imperial atelier.⁶ This suggests that Mirza Ghulam and others active in this manuscript had found new patronage amongst the Mughal nobility. We do not have any evidence as yet to point to a particular patron. However, aesthetic similarities of contemporary paintings (made in around 1610–15) for the important Mughal nobles, Murtaza Khan Shaykh Farid Bukhari and Bahadur Khan would suggest them as potential patrons. Therefore, firmly assigning the present *Shahnama* folio to the category of subimperial Mughal work.⁷ JS

- 1 Other ascribed illustrations from this manuscript are published in Sotheby's 1 July 1969, lot 101 (HaydarKashmiri); Sotheby's 13 July 1971, lot 138 (HaydarKashmiri), lot 139 (Da'ud), and lot 140 (Muhammad Pandit); and Sotheby's 7 December 1971, lot 54 (Muhammad Pandit).
- 2 Sotheby's, London, 7 December 1971, lot 55, with an ascription specifying that the artist corrected the work of Da'ud; and Christie's, London, 4 October 2012, lot 18.
- 3 British Library Add. 18579, ff. 63a, 64b, 311b, 396a.
- 4 *Diwan* of Amir Hasan Dihlawi, Walters Art Museum W.650, ff. 15a, 32b, 84b, 127a, and 157a, published in J. Seyller, 'The Walters Art Museum Diwan of Amir Hasan Dihlawi and Salim's Atelier at Allahabad', figs. 1, 3, 7, 10, and 12, in R. Crill, S. Stronge, and A. Topsfield, eds., *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, pp. 95–110 (London and Ahmedabad, 2004).
- 5 *Bustan* of Sa'di, f. 89b, Art and History Trust, published in A. Soudavar and M. Beach, *Art of the Persian Courts* (New York, 1992), cat. 137i.
- 6 For example, Haydar Kashmiri contributed a single painting to the copiously illustrated c. 1584 *Tarikh-i khandan-i Timuryya* (f. 165b), and Muhammad Pandit was responsible for a single one in 1597–99 National Museum *Baburnama* (f. 24a).
- 7 See L. Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, 2 vols. (London, 1995), cat. nos. 5.311–5.315, pp. 581–587.





Zebra

Imperial Mughal, attributed to Murar, c. 1625–30

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

13.8 × 19.7 cm

Amongst the individual royal animals celebrated visually in paintings produced at the Mughal court – notably, elephants, horses, blackbucks, and falcons – the zebra was undoubtedly the most exotic. Obtained by trade from Ethiopia and brought as a gift to Jahangir on the occasion of the New Year festival in March 1621 by some Turks in the company of Mir Ja'far, the Mughal governor of Surat and Cambay, the appearance of the dramatically striped zebra played perfectly to the emperor's longstanding fascination with natural phenomena. In his memoirs Jahangir described the creature as both a wild ass and a kind of mule:

It was exceedingly strange, for it was for all the world exactly like a tiger. Tigers have black and yellow stripes, but this one was black and white. There were black stripes, large and small in proportion to where they were, from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail and from the tip of its ear to the top of its hoof. Around its eyes were black stripes of great fineness—you'd say the painter of destiny had produced a tour de force on the canvas of time with his wonder-working brush. It was so strange that some thought it might have been painted but it was clear that that was how God had made it.¹

Though Jahangir soon gifted the rare creature to his geopolitical and cultural rival Shah 'Abbas of Iran, who also maintained a royal menagerie, he first directed Mansur, the preeminent natural history painter at the Mughal court, to depict for posterity this curious bit of divine handiwork. Jahangir personally intervened by adding an informative inscription along the lateral edge of the zebra painting; it provides the circumstances of the zebra's arrival, the date of 1621, and the name Mansur along with his epithet, *Nadir al-'Asr* (Wonder of the Age) (fig. 1).² By all accounts, the consummate skill with which Mansur captured the proportions, markings and coarse hair of the zebra set the highwater mark for contemporary Mughal artists as they attempted to make exact likenesses of even absolutely unfamiliar creatures or objects. Attributed to Mansur, too, is a second image of the zebra, this time with the animal facing in the opposite direction and without an accompanying inscription (fig. 2).³ In both versions, which entered their respective institutions more than a hundred years ago, the tethered zebra is framed tightly within the composition, which otherwise consists of only a plain biscuit-coloured background.

Considered to be the third zebra painting of the period, the present work is widely associated with an artist other than Mansur. The proportions of the zebra's body differ slightly from those of its counterparts, with the flank more elongated and the rump a bit enlarged. Its markings, too, are similar but not identical to those of the previous versions, and the texture of the mane and fur is less convincingly palpable. Given the dearth of literary mentions of the arrival of a second zebra at court, these





discrepancies suggest that the previously unidentified artist neither had the opportunity to study the animal firsthand nor was fastidious about replicating the exact arrangement of markings from one of Mansur's paintings. Zebra stripes are distinctive enough in their coverage of the body, density, and definition that they enable one individual zebra to recognise another. The general characteristics of the markings also vary by subspecies. In this case they extend all the way to the hooves and do not alternate with light brown shadow stripes. These features identify the specimen depicted here as a Grant's zebra (*equus quagga boehmi*), named after the Scottish explorer James Augustus Grant (1827-92), rather than as a Burchell's zebra, as has recently been proposed.⁴ The absence of shadow stripes is particularly apparent amongst the horizontal markings on the rump and on the wedgelike markings on the belly that are articulated only by outline. There has been some retouching of the face, though not enough to obscure the sensitively recorded detail of whiskers on the animal's lips.

The elaboration of the zebra's trappings and background signals a shift away from the purely documentary approach of the two zebra paintings of 1621 and towards a more generalised, somewhat grander presentation of the creature. A thin red halter again drapes across the zebra's neck, but now the harness proper has been rendered in gold, a royal plume adorns the head, and the animal stands placidly without the restraint of a rope tether. The compositional frame has been loosened considerably, allowing for more space around the creature in every direction. The artist fills the upper reaches of the flat green background with a strip of hazy sky. More importantly, he now strews clumps of flowers across the entire foreground, complementing them with thin washes of a darker green to provide a semblance of a ground line. But it is the very rendering of the plants that holds the key to the identity of the artist responsible for this painting. Strikingly, the leaves here are drawn in a kind of sketchy, skeletal manner with edges tipped in dark green. This, it turns out, is an unusual shorthand way of rendering flowers. The various blossoms are also executed in an abbreviated manner.



below left

Fig. 3 Four Portraits: (upper left) A Raja (Perhaps Raja Sarang Rao), by Balchand; (upper right) 'Inayat Khan, by Daulat; (lower left) 'Abd al-Khaliq, probably by Balchand; *lower right* Jamal Khan Qaravul, by Murad, Folio from the Shah Jahan Album; recto c. 1610–15, verso 1541; Metropolitan Museum of Art (55.121.10.29)

below

Four Portraits, detail



Amongst the imperial Mughal painters of the 1620s and 1630s who include flowers in a similar position in their works, only Murar regularly depicts flowers in this manner. He is known primarily from his work during Shahjahan's reign (1627-58), mostly dating to 1635-40. These include several illustrations in the Royal Library *Padshahnama*,⁵ the repainted and expanded sections of three illustrations from a *Gulistan* of c. 1610 that were set into a mirror case,⁶ and a Kevorkian Album portrait of Khan Dawran Bahadur Nusrat Jang inscribed by Shahjahan.⁷ An earlier phase of Murar's work is represented by a discreetly signed portrait of Shahjahan executed on a small patch of paper affixed over the original figure of Jahangir in *Shahjahan Riding with His Son*, along with a cluster of flowers in the lower left; circumstances suggest that this propagandistic artistic alteration was carried out in 1628, when the newly accessioned Shahjahan saw fit to direct his artists to revise personal and political history in a few paintings.⁸ The closest match of flower styles seen here however, occurs in a Kevorkian Album portrait of *Jamal Khan Qarawul*, which is ascribed to Murar by Jahangir himself, a fact that necessarily dates the painting no later than 1627 (figs. 3-4).⁹ Finally, Murar's venture into animal studies apparently did not begin or end with this zebra, for two paintings in Berlin depicting a small group of domesticated antelopes are reportedly ascribed with his name.¹⁰ Both paintings display a similarly sensitive rendering of the heads, bodies and fur of the animals but also convey lively movement as they scratch and frolic in a courtyard with patches of wispy grass. This historically important natural history painting thus can be attributed to Murar in the early years of his career. JS

1. *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, translated, edited, and annotated by W. Thackston (New York and Oxford, 1999), p. 360.
2. Victoria and Albert Museum IM. 23-1925, published in A. Das, *Wonders of Nature: Ustad Mansur at the Mughal Court*, pl. V.7, p. 86.
3. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 14.659, published in Das, *Wonders of Nature*, pl. V.9, p. 87.
4. Das, *Wonders of Nature*, p. 86.
5. Royal Library RCIN 1005025, ff. 49a, 122b, 144a, 194b, published in M. Beach, E. Koch, and W. Thackston, *King of the World: The Padshahnama: An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor* (London and Washington, D.C., 1997), pls. 9, 23, 31, and 38. In his signature on f. 194b, Murar self-effacingly proclaims himself to be 'the helpless pupil of Nadir al-Zaman', i.e., Abu'l Hasan.
6. The David Collection 1/2009, published in J. Seyller, "Two Mughal Mirror Cases," *Journal of the David Collection* 3 (2010), figs. 1-2. 6-7. 9-10.
7. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 55.121.10.31v, published in S.C Welch et al., *The Emperors' Album* (New York, 1987), no. 71.
8. Victoria and Albert Museum IM. 12-1925, published in S. Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor* (London, 2002), pl. 95. Murar also signed the trailing figure of Prince Dara Shikoh, who was formerly Prince Shahjahan (or Khurram) in the original formulation.
9. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 55.121.10.29r, published in Welch et al., *The Emperors' Album*, no. 26.
10. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin I.4599, fols.11r and 17r.



Fig. 1 Zebra, Mansur, Mughal, 1621, Victoria & Albert Museum (IM.23-1925)



Fig. 2 Zebra, Attributed to Mansur, Mughal, c. 1621, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**Panel from a Portable Gold Ground Lacquered Casket,
probably Made for a Woman**

Mughal style from Gujarat, with Deccani influence, c. 1600–1640

20 × 22 cm

Pigments, gold and lacquer on wood

This panel, once part of a luxurious casket (together with figs. 1, 2 and two further restored panels in a private collection), has an underlying painted scene on a gold ground, which is then covered with a protective layer of liquid shellac. It would have been the casket's side panel and the counter part of fig. 2. This panel depicts a lively, courtly hunting scene with bejewelled hunters, in which the individual genders are at first glance ambiguous to us. A princely figure on horseback gallops across a golden landscape strewn with Chinese style rocks and oversized flowering plants while a richly dressed couple scamper in front, chasing flying ducks. Above three figures, one holding a falcon in a right gloved hand, a second holding a white staff/stick with bent top and a small bag in their left hand while a third figure with a gun over their right shoulder looks back at a rabbit they had just shot.

The hunt was an ancient expression of kingship, and the women who accompanied rulers on the hunt highlighted the king's masculinity with their quiescent, watching beauty.¹ When a woman hunted, she inhabited this masculinity. A crack shot, Nur Jahan, for example, had herself portrayed in a man's stance, wearing male clothing and holding a long matchlock.² In later decades, representations of huntresses became plentiful, and sometimes these women hunted in male dress. A Rani from Basohli, in a mid-18th-century Guler painting, is illustrative as she rides to the hunt with her female attendants in hunting green and turbans.³ Turbans flattered a woman's beauty, but they also signified masculine expression. The Rani wears a man's *patka* and a raja's turban with feather aigrette. Her unbound hair is often the mark of the huntress, and the composition is about her authority.⁴ Historically, great queens were regarded as male and even took male titles. The archetypal huntress who wears male dress, hair streaming from her turban, was the legendary queen Chand Bibi.⁵

While this panel offers a rare early portrayal of women donning masculinity in the hunt, the relationships it portrays between masculine and feminine are more subtle and complex. Together with four other panels probably from the same casket (figs. 1 and 2) as well as lacquered panels from the same workshop or cluster of workshops,⁶ it is an important precursor to later 17th- and 18th-century depictions of women's phallic authority and sexuality.

With neither visible breasts nor long hair, the rider may be male, although the horse appears to be a mare. The three figures who run with "him" are male and female, all wear the masculine dress of hunters with short *jamas*, some have short hair, their faces are androgynous, and they are bejeweled. In addition, several have breasts, including the one leaning towards the flying ducks who wears a man's turban and a diaphanous gold sprinkled *jama*. Two paintings from Amber, though they are dated 1670–80 can help us with this portion of the composition. In them Raja Ram Singh's *zanana* accompanies him to the hunt, which is led by women who





evinced a forceful certainty quite different from the other women's attitudes.⁷ Nevertheless, the Raja dominates, and the *zanana's* presence highlights his virility. What makes the lacquered panel different from a painting like this one is, not only the cross-dressing but also the two women at top, both in men's dress, who show no interest in the scene below.

The few surviving painted and lacquered wooden objects from early 17th century India might have been made in Gujarat in a provincial Mughal style. Among the extant examples is an incomplete fall-front cabinet in the Victoria & Albert Museum IS (inv. 142-1984)⁸, the panel mentioned above in the David Collection (inv. 56/1999) (fig. 1) and a box with a sliding lid depicting European figures also in the David Collection (inv. 29/2014, see von Folsach 2021, pp. 152-177), a fall-front cabinet in the Ashmolean Museum (inv. EA1978.129, see von Folsach 2021, fig. 10) and the interior drawer of a wooden writing box inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the L.A. County Museum of Art (inv. M 73.5.340, see von Folsach 2021, fig. 8).

These caskets and panels purvey fantasies of wild forests and foreign lands. Here folk tales abound about tribal huntresses whom rulers meet in the forest and marry. Chand Bibi, of course, was a famous Deccan queen. Ebba Koch has written of the masculine eros of the hunt in Mughal poetics, but in the south that eros could evoke a female landscape of women who behaved like men.⁹ To put the huntresses, as such, in context, a panel of Persian hunters on another lacquered box recalls the far northwest (Ashmolean Museum inv. EA1978.129), while on several boxes Europeans dazzle from across the seas, resembling, not the merchants who were familiar on the west coast, but picture fantasies. From a land of make believe, on a lacquered sliding box in the David Collection (inv. 29/2014), a bizarre huntress holds a falcon, her Hindu *choli*, which she wears without a *dupatta* (the customary scarf), exposing a pale bare belly over a European skirt.

Whether or not these panels were painted in Gujarat, their style, what scholars generically call "subimperial," is impossible to associate with a specific area of India. Von Folsach writes: "Stylistically, the Indian figures on the sides of the David Collection's sliding box are of a character that could be found in the studios of every painter spread across northern India and whose ultimate source was the Mughals' court studios."¹⁰ This was because the painters' goal was to purvey cosmopolitanism. One place they did not reference, therefore, was the world outside their doors.

Exoticism was an enduring commercial theme, and on these boxes, huntresses in male clothing were an exotic wonder. They were well matched by scenes of travel, foreigners and female authority on other panels. The Rajput woman portrayed in a bullock cart on the David Collection panel from our casket (fig. 1) may be on her way to a wedding with, one deduces, a Mughal groom because the women who accompany her wear Mughal dress. In each of the other three panels, a woman holds court in a garden. In two of the panels, the protagonist is Hindu (fig. 2) and in the third, she is European. All three women are in authority over female attendants.

Huntresses and kingdoms of women ruling women were a staple of adventure stories, but adventure stories had heroes. In them men journey towards command over themselves and others. There are no heroes taking charge in these panels. The compositional formula for women sitting in state, found in three of them,



proliferated in later decades when male authority was waning and queens and courtesans were becoming an imposing presence across the political landscape. At least some of these paintings were produced for women. A casket covered in scenes about women's lives? It is intriguing and not at all implausible that it was made for a woman, perhaps even a woman undertaking a long journey in a bullock cart. MA

- 1 Akbar and Hamid Bakari, Akbarnama, Miskina (composition) and Sarwan (color), 1590–95, Victoria & Albert Museum, IS.2:56-1896
- 2 By Abu'l Hasan, the painting, which probably dates to 1612–1613, is in the Raza Library, Rampur, Inv. H.1021. Most scholars agree, although there is not proof, that the painting depicts Empress Nur Jahan
- 3 Published in *Life at Court: Art for India's Rulers, 16th to 19th centuries* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1986), cat.
- 4 Unbound hair expressed release from the social constraints of femininity. See Olivelle, P., "Hair and Society: social significance of hair in South Asian Traditions," in Hildebeitel, A., and Miller, B. (eds), *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998, pp. 11– 49
- 5 On queens' masculinity, see Talbot, C., "Rudrama– devi, the Female King: Gender and Political Authority in Medieval India," in Shulman, D. (ed), *Syllables of Sky: Studies in South Indian Civilization, In honour of Velcheru Narayana Rao*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, pp. 391– 430. For more on Chand Bibi, see Hutton, D., "Portraits of A Noble Queen – Chand Bibi in the Historical Imaginary," in Aitken, M. (ed), *A Magic World: New Visions of Indian Painting*, Vol. 68, No. 2, The Marg Foundation, 2016, pp. 50– 63
- 6 See Glynn, C., fig. 12
- 7 Koch, E., *Dara Shikoh Shooting Nilgais: Hunt and Landscape in Mughal Painting*, Occasional Papers, Vol.1 Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1998, pp. 27– 28
- 8 von Folsach, K., 'Exoticism' Reversed: On a Painted Wooden Box from Mughal India in von Folsach, K. and Meyer, J., (eds) *Journal of the David Collection*, volume 5, 2021, pp. 152– 177



above

Fig. 1 Front or top panel from the same casket as ours, The David Collection (56/1999)

below

Fig. 2 Side panel from the same casket as ours, Private collection

Imaginary Flower Made for Raja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur

Northern Deccan, Aurangabad, dated VS (Vikram Samvat) 1726 (1669 CE)

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 31.1 × 18.6 cm; painting 19.6 × 11.1 cm

Published

Haidar, N. and M. Sardar, *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700* (New York, 2015), no. 169

Indian Miniatures and Works of Art, London, Galloway, 2000, no. 28, pp. 60–61

This painting of an imaginary flower arouses in most modern viewers an immediate sensation of unalloyed delight, thanks in large part to its amazingly strong decorative values. The stark abstraction of the leaves, stalks, and blossoms, the powerful symmetry of the compact composition, and the contrast of brilliant colours against a shimmering gold background – all these make for an aesthetic experience that somehow rivals or even transcends the familiar beauty of the mundane imperfections, tempered palette, and all-encompassing space of flowers in their natural environment. It is a surprise, too, that the painters responsible for this work and others from the same manuscript veered so dramatically away from the highly naturalistic qualities that prior Mughal artists had sought to emulate after they were exposed to European florilegia around 1620.



Fig. 1 Portrait of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur, Rajasthan, Jodhpur, c. 1660-1670





There are other intriguing aspects of this series of flower paintings as well. The most unexpected of these is that these spare, unabashedly decorative images of flowers, some elaborated with a pair of flying insects fluttering above, are embedded in a Sanskrit philosophical text written in Devanagari and identified as *Siddantha-sara*, *Siddantha-bodha* and *Aporaksha-siddantha* in an extraordinarily informative colophon (fig. 2–3). It mentions the text’s author and patron, Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur (fig. 3), who succeeded to the throne as a ten-year-old, ruled 1638–1678, and received the distinguished title of Maharaja on 6 January 1654 from Emperor Shahjahan. The scribe is named as Vyasa Madhava, and the provenance is listed as Aurangabad, the Mughal administrative centre in the northern Deccan from which Aurangzeb (and from 1658, as the newly accessioned Emperor ‘Alamgir) and others spearheaded a long campaign of conquest in the Deccan. Completing the colophon’s windfall of information is the date of completion: the 5th of the bright half of the month of Kar-tik in the year Vikram Samvat 1726, corresponding to Tuesday, 19 October 1669.

The seeming improbability of this Rajasthani chieftain composing a Sanskrit text and sponsoring a manuscript illustrated with a series of unrelated images in a rather elegant Islamicising style is explained in part by Maharaja Jaswant Singh’s two military stints in the region, one in 1662–1664 and the other 1667–1670. Aurangabad served as a particularly cosmopolitan meeting ground of nobles and artists from many parts of India, and their encounters frequently bore artistic fruit both at Aurangabad and at various centres in Rajasthan. That said, this variety of cultural hybridity has no exact parallel in the annals of Indian painting.

Some illustrated folios have fifteen lines of text on the reverse, as one might expect of a philosophical text, but others – including this example – defy all precedent and feature an identical image of the flower on the reverse. The discreet borders feature an Ottoman-inspired *chintamani* (wish-fulfilling jewel) motif set within an open trellis design.

Other folios from this manuscript are published in Haidar and Sardar 2015, pp. 292–293, and Leach 1998, pp. 230–231. JS



Figs. 2-3 Double-sided folio with identifying colophon and date, Musée Guimet - Musée National des Arts Asiatiques

Maharaja Bakhat Singh of Nagaur and Jodhpur entering Nagaur on horseback

Rajasthan, Jodhpur or Nagaur, attributed to Dalchand, c. 1725

Brush and ink heightened with opaque pigments, gouache and gold on paper

32 × 22.3 cm

Inscribed on the recto in nasta'liq script and on the verso in Devanagari script '*in taswir-i maharaj bakhat singh dar nagaur* ['likeness of Maharaja Bakhat Singh in Nagaur'] and '*asabi maharajdh(i)raj maharaj sri bakhat singhji ri che* ['image of Maharaj dhiraj Maharaj Bakhat Singhi']

Provenance

Sven Gahlin (1934–2017) collection, acquired in London, before 1968

Published

McInerney, T., *Indian Drawing – an exhibition chosen by Howard Hodgkin*, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1983, no 15

Diamond, D., Glynn, C. & Jasol, K.S., *Garden & Cosmos – the Royal Paintings of Jodhpur*, British Museum, 2008, fig. 18c, p. 273

McInerney, T., 'Dalchand', in *Masters of Indian Painting*, Beach, M., Fischer, E., Goswamy, B.N. eds., Artibus Asiae Publishers, 2011, fig. 5, p. 571

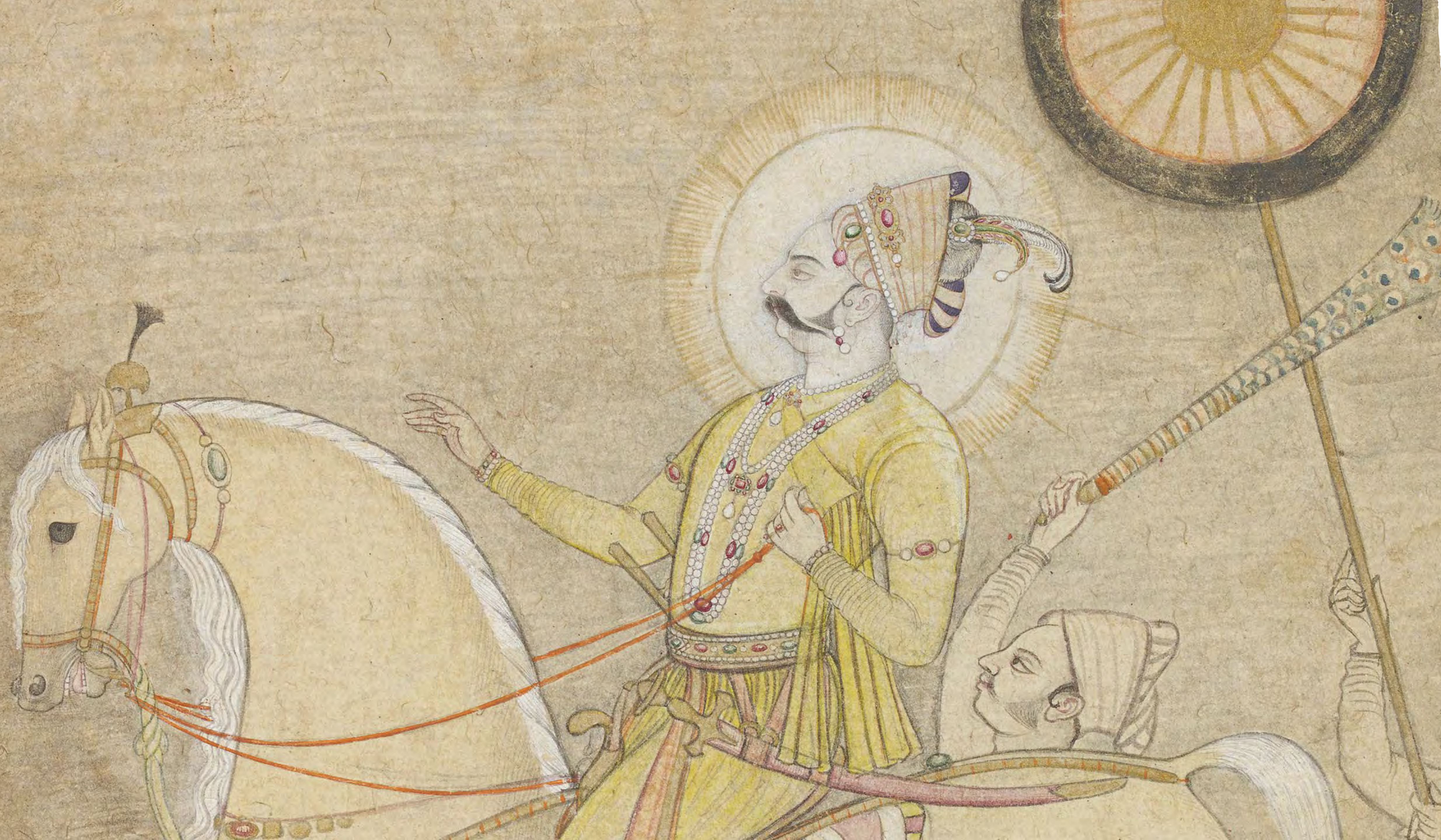
This portrait of Maharaja Bakhat Singh of Nagaur and Jodhpur (b. 1706 r. 1751–1752) was first published in the 1980s in an exhibition of 'Indian Drawing' at the Hayward Gallery, chosen by the British artist and collector, Howard Hodgkin. Our drawing was also published in 'Garden & Cosmos' (Diamond, Glynn, Jasol 2008) and most recently in Terence McInerney's chapter on the Mughal artist, 'Dalchand' (Beach, M., Fischer, E. & Goswamy, B.N. 2011).

Dalchand was an Imperial Mughal artist from the first half of 18th century, a period which is now attracting long overdue attention. He initially worked in Delhi with his father, Bhavanidas, for the Emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707–1712) before moving to Jodhpur in around 1724, and a little later to Kishangarh. He spent most of his career in Rajasthan where he was instrumental in bringing the Mughal high style with its acute psychological observation to those Rajasthani courts he moved to. He was active between 1710–1760, and his importance cannot be overstated.

According to McInerney (McInerney 2011, p. 571, fig. 3) this coloured drawing would have originally been larger, duplicating the format of the famous painting by Dalchand of Maharaja Abhai Singh on horseback from around 1725 (2011, pp. 570–571, fig. 4).

Maharaja Bakhat Singh of Nagaur and Jodhpur (b. 1706, r. 1751–1752) was the second son of Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur (r. 1707–1724). He murdered his father in 1724, at the instigation of his elder brother Abhai Singh (r. 1724–1749), in return for the rule of the *thikana* (local fiefdom) of Nagaur. These troubled times at the Marwar court nonetheless produced some of its finest paintings. Bakhat Singh finally succeeded to the throne of Jodhpur in 1751, only to be murdered a year later by a niece, the widow of Maharaja Iswari Singh of Jaipur, by means of a poisoned robe.





Two Ladies on a Terrace

By a Mughal artist, 1730–50

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, laid down on an 18th century Awadh album page associated with Nawab Shuja al-Daula or a member of his entourage

Folio: 53.8 × 38.2 cm, painting: 28.2 × 17.6 cm

Inscribed on the flyleaf and reverse of the album page in Persian:

'Likeness of the princess who repaired the Tajganj tomb'

In the margin, a number: '5'

On the verso of the album leaf, Persian verses in nasta'liq and a signature:

'I speak well of the great men of religion

Whether it be Friday or Saturday

The friends (of God) are God's deputies

They are always aware of the truth of matters

Muhammad Husayn wrote it. It was written in Dar-al Saltana Isfahan [10?]49 (1639/40 AD)

Two ladies are seated at their ease, under a high white canopy on a terrace. They are seated on a summer carpet strewn with bolsters, cushions, sweetmeats and other edibles. They are attended to by six women and four seated female musicians. The lady on the right is giving an ornament to the one on the left who holds a fakir's crutch and wears a high Chaghatai headdress, indicating her Mughal/Mongol descent. Such scenes are some of the most characteristic of Mughal painting in the first half of the 18th century, and even the grandest of Imperial albums such as the St Petersburg Muraqqa' contain some: see for example Petrosyan et al, 1996, p. 349, pl. 1.

The scene is set at night by a lake with a full moon appearing between the clouds. The cold blank landscape punctuated by cypress trees suggests the effect caused by moonlight. In contrast candles in the foreground light the terrace scene, although not of course serving as internal light sources. The coldness of the landscape and the lack of interest in spatial recession in the background, not normally found in Mughal paintings of this date, even in nocturnal scenes, suggest that this style was instrumental in the formation of the Hyderabad style of the mid-18th century, as found in the Hyderabad Johnson Ragamala (Falk and Archer, no. 426).

Tajganj is of course the name of the whole complex round the Taj Mahal in Agra, the tomb (rauza) of Mumtaz Mahal, built by the Emperor Shah Jahan. The inscription may be entirely fanciful; on the other hand it may be saying that the begum in the picture may have funded the repair of the Taj Mahal. Like any other Indian building, the Taj Mahal needed constant maintenance and repairs to keep it in good condition. It was practically the only great Mughal monument which was well taken care of in the decline of the Mughal Empire.

There are numerous examples of such architectural works being instigated or carried out by Mughal noblewomen: Maham Anaga, Akbar's wet nurse and foster mother, and an important political player in her own right, had one of the first Mughal



mosques constructed in Delhi in 1561 – the Khairul Manazil, opposite Purana Qila, the ‘Old Fort’. Under Jahangir, women of the court encouraged the building of mosques. His Rajput mother, a princess from the Amber family, was responsible for founding the Begum Shahi Mosque in Lahore (1611–14), built by Jahangir in her honour. She constructed a cascading fountain near the idgah in Bayana (1612) and was one of the most adventurous tradeswomen at court during her time as mother to the Emperor.

- 1 The size of this album page is slightly larger but close in style to the Large Clive Album (49 × 34 cms) in the Victoria & Albert Museum (IS.133:22/A-1964), the subject of an essay by Axel Langer ‘Obvious Narratives and Hidden Messages in the Large Clive Album’ in ed. Weis, F. *Eighteenth Century Indian Muraqqa’s Audiences – Artists – Patrons and Collectors* For the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, publ. Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2025, pp 41–72.
There were three albums (the Small Clive Album, the Large Clive Album and a third Album from which nine leaves were sold at Christie’s 18 December 1968 (lots 66–74). All three Albums were originally assembled by Shuja al-Daula, Nawab of Awadh, and given by him to Robert Clive in 1765 as part of the financial reparations due after the Battle of Buxar in October 1764.
- 2 The tall, flat-topped hat is part of the costume of the Mughals from eastern Uzbekistan. Of mixed Turkic and Mongol ethnicities, they spoke a Turkic language known as Chaghatai. A portrait of an 18th century Mughal lady also wearing a Chaghatai headdress is in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Gift of J.H.Wade 1920.1967).



A Mughal Beauty, possibly from an Album Made for Nawab Shuja' al-Dawla (r. 1754–1775)

Mughal, by a master court artist, mid-18th century

Opaque pigments and gold on paper, laid down on a later, sumptuous gold album page with small floral trellis design

Album page 50.8 × 40.2 cm; painting 27.4 × 17.7 cm

Provenance

Private collection, London (acquired from Spink & Son in the 1960s)

Monumental in scale and of exceptional quality this 18th portrait of a Mughal beauty, though painted in a familiar format in three quarter profile, has been executed with great subtlety and has the characteristics of a real portrait. Its large-scale presentation with lavish border mimics the effect of a framed European painting.

This is presumably a portrait of an important courtesan who embodied the ideal of feminine beauty in her time. The artist has chosen a soft, 'sfumato' technique to convey the slight roundness of her face, her moody eyes with a faraway gaze, her thick eyelashes and perfectly formed eyebrows which make for an alluring expression.

The portrait is set against a green background with a thin register of sky above with pink and white clouds highlighted in gold. She is dressed as a princess, with diaphanous gold decorated *odhani* over a muslin or cotton *peshwaz*, the front open and edged with a multitude of short lappets. These are edged in green, red and stamped and outlined in gold. A mass of pearls around her neck, edged with drop emeralds, a longer pearl necklace with a white jewel carved in the shape of flower and more strands of pearls interspersed with emeralds and spinels. The earrings and forehead ornament are of a similar style to what we see on 17th century ladies of the Mughal court. In her left hand she holds a *phalsa* (Indian berry to be consumed with wine) to be dipped into a blue and white porcelain cup she holds in her other hand.

In the late 17th and 18th century, a fashion developed for large scale female portraiture in profile, a sort of template conveying a standard type of beauty and often wearing luxurious attire. Unlike these striking idealised portraits of feminine beauty, our artist appears to be painting a specific person.

The wide and lavish gold ground border with trellis design enclosing roses is virtually identical in style to that of a late 18th century Awadh painting in the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery in Vadodara depicting a Juggler performance and fireworks, Faizabad c. 1765–75 and measuring 50.5 × 70cm (Doshi 1995). Parul Singh has just published two little known royal albums in the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery which she convincingly associates with Shuja' al-Dawla, Nawab of Awadh (r.1754–1775) (Singh 2025 p.371, note 3). The smaller album (PG.5C.25–45) has identical measurements to our painting (50.8 × 40 cm). Singh's article is mainly based on paintings in the second, larger album (PG.5C.9–22), including the cover of Doshi's 1995 book, mentioned above.



The museum was founded in 1887 by Maharaja Sayagirao Gaekwad III and formally opened in 1921. The German art historian Hermann Goetz (1898–1976) was its most famous director from 1936–1953. Goetz published the two unknown albums in his book *Early Oudh School of Mughal Painting: Two albums in the Baroda Museum*, Bulletin Baroda, Mus. IX, 1952–53



Horse and his Groom

Rajasthan, Sawar, c. 1685–1700
 Opaque pigments and gold on paper
 30 × 40.5 cm, including red border

The inscription on the reverse reads: *ghodi: mirga-mal; kotatha sa sai* (mare: deer-vanquisher (it could also mean deer-garland, probably in association with the speed of this horse); *Kotatha sa* (?)) (earnest money which is paid for the performance of a specified work)

Provenance

Peter Cochrane (1913–2004) collection, acquired from Kasmin in 1971

A chestnut horse dressed with his saddle and colourful cover stands in profile facing his groom against a thinly painted turquoise green background. The horse has an imprint of a katar on his haunch. This painting must have been part of a group of portraits of this Raja's favourite horses, a tradition which was not exclusive to the Rajput courts. These early paintings from the less well-known courts of Rajasthan first came to the market in the 1960s when their strong lines and primitive but striking palette attracted the attention of British contemporary artists and dealers, such as Howard Hodgkin, Kasmin and Peter Cochrane. A number of American collectors, such as Stuart Cary Welch and James Ivory, were also interested in this aesthetic, so different from the refined elegance of Mughal and Persian painting. Although paintings from Sawar and Isarda were plentiful enough in the 1960s and 1970s, they rarely appear on the market today.

Sawar is a small Sisodia Rajput kingdom in central Rajasthan, established in the time of Jahangir. It is surrounded by Amber, Mewar, Bundi and Kota. The court style of Sawar shows some affinity to that of its neighbouring kingdoms, whilst retaining a style that combines the naive and the sophisticated (Topsfield 2012). An outstanding group of Sawar painting is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Howard Hodgkin collection).

Peter Cochrane (1913–2004) was an important British art dealer who worked for the Redfern gallery in the late 1930s and 1940s before joining Arthur Tooth & Sons in 1950. He was instrumental in bringing American Abstract Expressionism to London in the 1950s. By the 1960s he was also promoting a younger generation of British artists, including Allen Jones, Peter Kinley and Howard Hodgkin. These artists followed Cochrane to Waddington Galleries, when Tooth Gallery briefly merged with Waddington in the mid-1970s.

Cochrane had always been a collector by instinct and together with Howard Hodgkin and his fellow dealer Kasmin, started collecting and dealing in Indian miniatures in the 1960s and 1970s (exhibitions of Rajput painting curated by Cochrane were held at the above-mentioned galleries throughout the 1970s). Their taste was primarily for the early Rajput aesthetic. Francesca Galloway acquired the Peter Cochrane collection from his estate.



A Dancing Courtesan – Folio from the Colebrook Album
North India, possibly Delhi region, early 19th century

Opaque pigments heightened with gold on paper and laid down on an album page
 Folio 33.1 × 24.4 cm; painting 21.5 × 14.4 cm

The reverse with 19th century inscriptions in ink, upper right corner *For dearest Mrs
 Bowell with Diana's kindest love, centre no. 22 / Lady Colebrooke / a nautch girl*

Provenance

Louisa Ann Colebrooke (c. 1789/90 – c. 1867) collection

Gifted to Mrs Bowell by Diana, granddaughter of Louisa Ann Colebrooke,

in January 1850

Thence by descent

This portrait of a dancing courtesan shows our protagonist in a red jacket with a short flared skirt over a sheer shirt with frilly cuffs. A golden sash is tied around her midriff, accentuating her waist. She wears a wraparound skirt made up of several layers over a pair of loose jamas. A yellow sash is draped and tucked into her waist sash. She wears an ornamented and feathered headdress, a necklace, and bracelets. She appears to be in motion, holding a black lock of her hair in her right hand. The simple background is divided into a green ground and a blue sky.

The oval painting is framed by a decorative dark blue border with gold decoration and surrounded by a white ground frame with decorative spandrel with lobed medallions and foliate and floral scrolling tendrils. This is then laid on cardboard within dark blue borders with repeating floral motifs, polychrome rules, wide borders with leaping deer and blue stylised flowers.

Our painting bears a remarkable resemblance to a late 17th-century painting probably from the Deccan of a dancing lady (fig. 1).

Louisa Ann Colebrooke, daughter of an army lieutenant, was born in Madras and baptised there in 1790. At the age of 17 she married an army officer and had a daughter Helen Olympia Stewart Cockayne. Widowed, she married her cousin once removed, Sir James Edward Colebrooke (1761–1838), 3rd Baronet, in Calcutta in January 1820. Colebrooke became a senior merchant in the Bengal establishment, judge of appeals at Murshidabad, and resident and commissioner at Delhi from 1777–1821. He was, however, suspended from office in 1829 "for various corrupt practices". She and her husband returned to England in 1829 and settled at Colebrooke Park in Kent. After her husband's death, Louisa Ann married her third and last husband, James Bremridge, in 1841. She died in 1867 after an accident in Horsham, Sussex, and was laid to rest in Southborough, Kent.



She acquired our painting, along with four others, most likely in Delhi around 1820, when she was living in the city with her second husband. All five paintings bear her name and a number on the verso. These five paintings ended up with Mrs Bowell in January 1850 (according to the inscription on the verso of one of the paintings). The gift dedication and brief description on the verso of each painting appear to be in a slightly different hand to the numbering and Lady Colebrooke.

It appears that Diana, granddaughter of Louise Ann Colebooke (daughter of Louisa Ann's only child Helen Olympia Stewart Cockayne) was given these paintings and in turn gifted them to Mrs. Bowell.



Fig. 1 Portrait of a dancing lady, probably Deccan, c. 1680 (Christie's, Lot 118 7th October 2013)



The Bard Nathuram Shooting an Arrow at a Target

Central India, Sitamau, signed by Pyar Chand and dated 1835–36
Opaque pigments heightened with gold and silver on paper
32.2 × 42.8 cm

Identifications in Devanagari script on the verso of the painting:

vyasaji sri Nathuramji ('the bard Nathuram ji'),

goro kumait nam ('the horse named Kumait'),

ora Kaccha ka ('[the groom] somebody from Kutch')

Signed and dated on recto at upper right in Devanagari script Musavar Pyar Chand
samvat 1892 ('the artist Pyar Chand 1835–6')

On the verso are 11 lines of verses in Hindi in Devanagari script written by Barahat
Lacchman ji dated Samvat 1894 [1837] in praise of the Maharaja Kunwar or prince.

Provenance

Sven Gahlin (1934–2017) collection

Sitamau in Central India, is on the borders of Malwa, Mewar and Kota. It stands out as one of the few Rajput schools that held out against Company School style of painting and the impact of photography that permeated 19th century painting in Rajasthan and eventually led to its demise. Sitamau, first identified by Robert Skelton, was the place of production of a small number of large and impressive processional scenes and other works that described the court life of this small state in the 1830s and 1840s. The style flourished during the long reign (1802–67) of Maharaja Raj Singh who lived to be ninety-seven. His son the Maharaj Kunwar Ratan Singh predeceased him and was succeeded by his grandson Bhawani Singh (reg. 1867–85). Sitamau's principal and most accomplished artist was Pyar Chand, who himself appears in a painting dated 1847, showing him sketching the ruler of Sitamau (Gray 1981, fig. 183, p.171). Inscriptions on other paintings indicate that Pyar Chand came from the ancient city of Mandasor, near to Sitamau. He produced singular paintings that embodied the brilliant colours and abstract compositions that we associate with the best of Rajput painting.

Other paintings by Pyar Chand and from Sitamau were exhibited at Spink & Son in 1976, pp. 25–27, nos. 108–112 (then ascribed to Indore) and two processional scenes once in the Ehrenfeld Collection (Ehnbom 1985, pp. 172–173, nos. 80–81).





दोयतो नदराम

Kunwar Rajmalji and Kunwar Chandmalji Riding to a Mela

Rajasthan, Kota, dated VS 1939/1882 CE

Opaque pigments, gold and silver on paper

Folio 46.3 × 40.9 cm; painting 38.8 × 33 cm

With a Devanagari inscription on the upper red border

Provenance

Milo Cleveland Beach collection

Published

Cleveland Beach, M., *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota*, Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1974, fig. 104

This jaunty and large equestrian portrait, a late Kota example of a genre that is a staple of Indian painting, comes with a twist -- its subject is not one but two similarly aged princes riding precisely in tandem. The inscription above names the riders as Kunwar Rajmal and Kunwar Chandmal, two otherwise unknown princes, and obligingly records their ages as twenty-nine years old for the former, and twenty-eight for the latter. The two princes have practically identical coiffures, pencil-thin moustaches, and jewellery. Although the inscription written in the upper border pair describes them as riding to a *mela*, or festival, both men rest swords on their shoulders in a soldierly manner.

The strength of this painting lies in its size and its lively two-dimensional rhythm. The artist stacks the pair of princes vertically so that they and their rearing mounts strike identical poses. He has the trio of attendants before them stride together as one and mitigates any potential tedium of visual repetition by introducing minor variations in their beard styles and sword positions. And he extends the rhythmic elements by tucking closely behind each rider a mostly hidden groomsmen with a banner in hand. The two horses' braids and caparisons sway and jangle in unison, and both steeds stare out at the world in wide-eyed frenzy.

Fish flop on a foreground river with zigzagging banks. Above that is a broad, upward-slanted zone laced with ridges and rendered with Schweinfurt (or Paris) green, a vibrant, arsenic-based pigment imported from Europe into India since the 1840s and featured widely in the Indian painting in the 1870s and 1880s. Prussian blue, a complementary foreign pigment, is used more selectively on scabbards and pouches. The vibrant 'Schweinfut green' is followed by another field that returns to a traditional green but is pressed into an ostentatiously semi-circular shape and texturised with a series of miniaturised tufts. Squeezed into the corners where the arching horizon meets the painting's lateral edges are the spires of a townscape and a small herd of blackbuck and deer. Schematic clouds ripple across a light blue sky.

This painting, dated 1882 in the inscription written above, is a fine expression of the late Kota aesthetic that evolved during the reign of Maharao Chattar Sal (or Shatru Sal) II (r. 1866-68).





Krishna Stealing the Butter – A Folio from a *Bhagavata Purana*

Punjab Hills, Bilaspur, c. 1770–80

Opaque pigments, gold and silver on paper

Folio 31.8 × 37.7 cm; painting 26.5 × 32.9 cm

With a black margin and a dark blue surround with white rules

Provenance

Thakur Ishwari Singh Chandela (originally of Bilaspur), Sirmoor

Svetoslav Roerich (1904–1993) collection

Ludwig Habighorst collection

Exhibited

'Der Blaue Gott in indischen Miniaturen', Mittelrhein Museum, Koblenz, 2014

Published

Habighorst, L. V., *Blumen – Bäume – Göttergärten in indischen Miniaturen*, Koblenz

2011, fig. 114, p. 143 (detail)

Habighorst, L.V., *Der blaue Gott in indischen Miniaturen*, Mittelrheinmuseum, Koblenz,

2014, Abb. 3, pp. 18–19

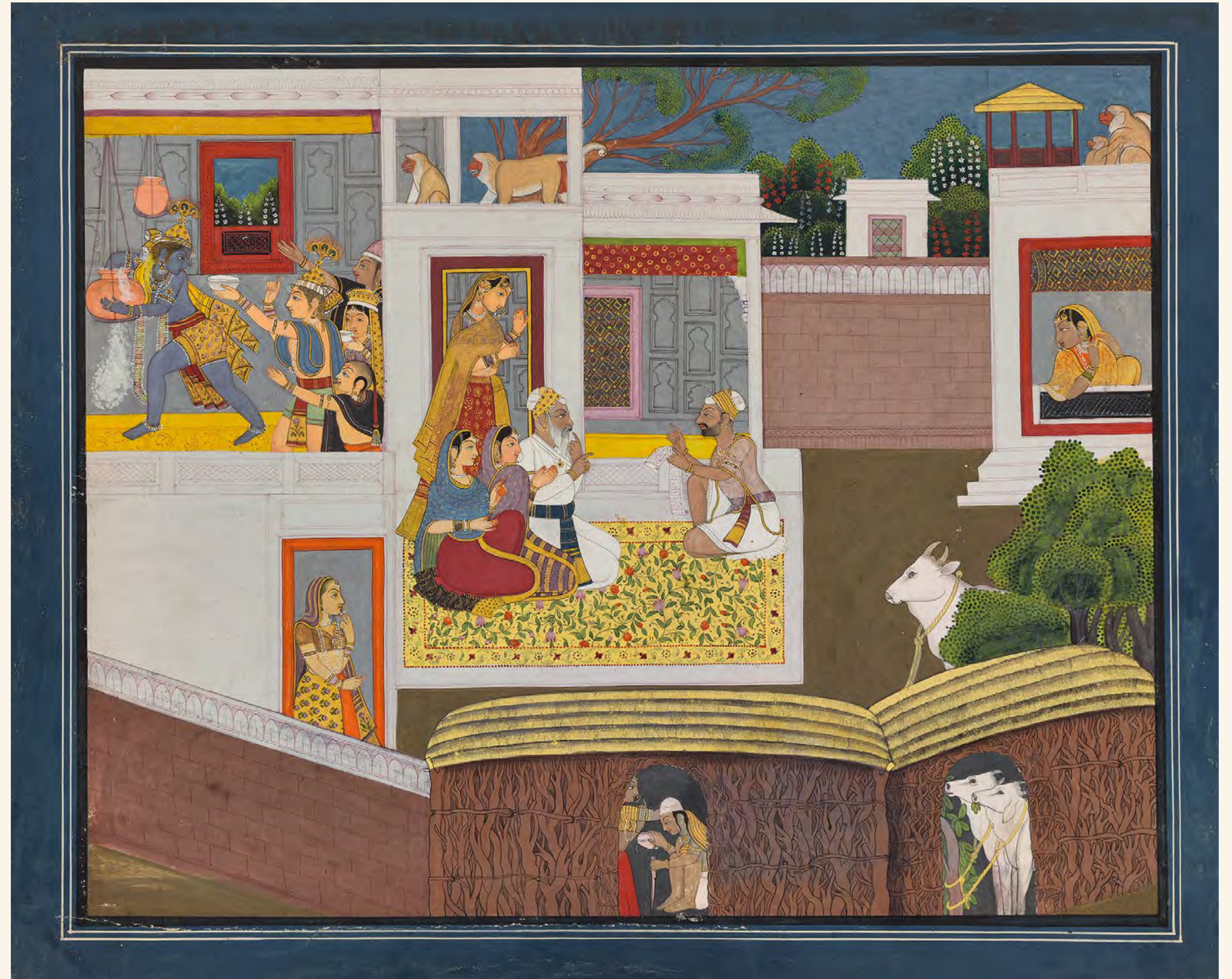
Inscribed on the verso in Urdu is a transcribed note from one Kishan Chand:

Shri Krishan Seva (?) ka patar.... Shri Gargacharya Gee ka Shrinand Gee aur Seva Gee ke paas Baghvaan Shri Krishan Chandar Anand.... ka janampatri sunaana aur Shri Krishan Chander aur Baldev Gee ke baal leela ka Gautem ke cheen-ne par se deehi ke handi he se deehi nikaalkar apni bhai Balraam Gee aur Deegar.... aur baandara ko baantreehehai. Kya manohar sanwali murti hai ke deekte deekte gee nahi barta - Muadhab Krishnan Chander ('Sri Kishan Seva's(?))

Translation of the above inscription:

Sri Nandaji and the women? attend Sri Gargacharyaji to hear Bhagvan Sri Krishan Chandra Anand's birth horoscope and Sri Krishan Chandra and Baldevji's childhood story of Gautam? who stole the yoghurt pot taking the yoghurt and distributing it to his brother Balaramji and others and monkeys. What a beautiful, dark deity, however much you look, your heart (or wanting) is not fulfilled. Regards, Krishnan Chander' (transcribed and translated by Qaisra Khan)

In chapter eight of the tenth canto of the *Bhagavata Purana*, the sage Garga, the family priest of the Yadus, has come to Gokul and being asked by Nanda to perform the samskarana or naming ceremony for the two boys, the sons of Yashoda and Rohini, does so in secret. He warned Nanda that should Kamsa come to hear of it, that he the family priest of the royal family had performed this ceremony, then the boys would be in danger. In the meantime, baby Krishna and Balarama, still in theory crawling, were up to all sorts of pranks, including raiding the pots of curd, milk and butter that



Yashoda had left hanging up so that he could not get at them as he had done earlier when they were on the ground (Bh P X, ch. 8, vv. 29–30). The artist shows him in a beautiful, contorted posture as he dips a bowl into the pot of curds at the same time as looking back at Balarama and his friends, who are holding out other pots or tucking into what he has already given them. The monkeys on the balcony are a reminder that that text actually says that Krishna stole the curds to give to the monkeys, not to his friends, but in an artistic convention dating from at least the first Early Rajput *Bhagavata Purana* of the 16th century, it is the friends who benefited from his largesse. Garga is shown in the guise of an astrologer, who sits with his scroll telling the boys' future to Nanda, Yashoda and Rohini. The artist shows us a view over the walls and thorn fences that surround the house where the cattle are tethered. Through a gap we can see a boy thumping a spike into the ground with a stone watched by a girl.

This rare and beautiful folio was once in the collection of Svetoslav Roerich (1904–1993), the son of Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947). The former was a painter and famous collector of Indian miniatures based in Bangalore, who was married to the Indian film star, Devika Rani (1908–1994), great-niece of Rabindranath Tagore. Svetoslav purchased this series from Thakur Ishwari Singh Chandela prior to 1954 when Archer first saw the series. Ishwari Singh Chandela was originally from Bilaspur. His family was connected to the royal family and he acquired the series from his grandfather, Kishan Chand, who inscribed the back of our painting. Kishan Chand was not the artist of the series but its previous owner.

The few other known paintings from this series show different episodes from the *Bhagavata Purana*, which concentrate on the childhood of Krishna. JP Losty believes that several different artists were involved with this set but all the paintings conform to the same stylistic and figural convention. The series belongs to what Archer characterises as the third phase of Bilaspur painting from 1770 where he observes influence from the new style of Guler in the treatment of figures and also in the opening up of the landscape. The abundant use of gold detailing, often punctuated, contributes to the beauty and elegance of this style.

Both Archer and Losty date the series to late in the reign of Devi Chand of Bilaspur (r.1741–78) who had married a Kangra princess. She was Regent for her young son Mahan Chand (r.1778–1824) who succeeded to the throne of Bilaspur at the young age of six, and this series, concentrating on the exploits of a young Krishna, may be connected to her regency.

Other paintings from this important series are published in:

Death of the demon, Pralamba, Ehrenfeld collection, published in Ehnborn 1985, no 107

Krishna and the cowherd boys graze the cattle in the forest, Roerich collection,

published in Archer 1973, Kahlur (Bilaspur) 46i, and Khandalavala 1958, fig.43

Krishna slays the crane demon, Roerich collection, published in Archer 1973, Kahlur

(Bilaspur) 46ii, and Khandalavala 1958, colour plate F

Krishna and the Gopas leading the cows to the forest, private collection, formerly in the

Ludwig Habighorst collection, published in Galloway, 2018, cat. 10, Khandalavala

1958, fig.44, and Pal et al.1993, fig.6, p. 34



**Rasalila – Folio from a Dispersed *Harivamsha* Series,
numbered 86 on the reverse**

Punjab Hills, Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, c. 1800–15

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

36 × 47.2 cm including border

Provenance

Private collection, New York, was acquired by the collector in 1958 from H.L. Bharany, in India

This painting belongs to a well-known Pahari series of the *Harivamsha* (Genealogy of Hari [Vishnu]). Comprising 16,374 *shlokas* and traditionally credited to the ancient sage Vyasa, the text of the *Harivamsha* recounts the life of Krishna in a level of detail matched only by the *Bhagavata Purana*. This particular series, which consists of large numbers of paintings without a running text or even a brief synopsis on the reverse, is widely associated with the work of Purkhu, a leading artist of the Punjab Hills. Although Purkhu has no known paintings ascribed to him, his name is known from pilgrimage records in the area that establish his position within a family of professional painters.¹ His major patron was Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra (r. 1775–1823), who maintained a large painting workshop. Upon Sansar Chand's loss of Kangra fort and town to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809, Purkhu apparently accompanied his patron as he moved from Kangra to the village of Samloti.²

If the early years of Purkhu's long career were occupied primarily by portraits of his young patron and others at court, the years shortly after 1800 were spent illustrating or guiding the workshop production of several series, notably the *Harivamsha*, *Gita Govinda*, *Rasikapriya*, *Shiva Purana*, and *Ramayana*, most of which are large-scale in format and extensive in scope, regularly numbering more than a hundred paintings each.³ A fine representative example of the artist's work in the dispersed *Harivamsha* is the present painting, which illustrates the riveting *Rasalila* (literally, 'play of passion'). On an autumnal night, the *gopis* (cowmaidens) of Vraja give in to their irresistible attraction to Krishna and gravitate towards him. Seeking him out and calling him by the name Damodara (literally, 'rope round the belly', a reference to a device by Yashoda used to keep the rambunctious infant Krishna close to her), they gather round him in rows and circles.⁴ To set the moment, Purkhu devotes half the composition to a vignette of Krishna's family and the townspeople of Vraja slumbering in overlapping thatched huts that are arrayed at whimsically irregular angles. In most cases, the house is brightened by a single lit candle placed in a shallow ornamental niche. The upper three dwellings are occupied by members of Krishna's own family, who are identified by labels written in white: (from left to right) his mother Yashoda (written Jasodha), his father Nanda, and his brother Balarama (or Balibhadra, as is written here). A second complementary vignette occurs in an unobtrusive dark strip along the



river Yamuna where two *gopas* (cowherds) are shown frontally as they doze beside their kine, each tenderly resting a protective hand on the back of the closest cow.

With these sidelights covered, the artist turns to the main event, the magically transcendent *rasalila*, where Krishna dances with each devotee, seemingly simultaneously and exclusively, an apt metaphor for the union of the individual with the divine. The canonically blue-skinned Krishna appears twice in the scene. In the lower grouping, the adolescent Krishna, superfluously identified by a label overhead, stands with a golden conical hat on his head and a cowherd's crook – not the customary flute – in hand, and gesticulates towards a compact bevy of infatuated *gopis*. This surely represents the *gopis'* initial nocturnal encounter with the divine cowherd. In the upper grouping, the artist redirects attention back towards the centre of the composition by having Krishna face left. This leaves Krishna at the centre of a clutch of eight damsels, resting his hand on the shoulder of one woman whom he has pulled close. In most devotional literature, Krishna's favourite is identified as Radha, though her name surprisingly appears nowhere in the *Harivamsha* text. Although a ringlike configuration predominates in most iterations of the *rasalila*, the arrangement here is more arc than circle, which suggests that this painting may depict a preliminary moment in the *rasalila* episode, and that the depiction of canonical circle of adoring devotees might possibly follow in a subsequent illustration.

Much of the effervescence of the painting comes from certain passages in the lush landscape. The trees themselves typically have an irregular dark area around the trunk that penetrates a surrounding rim of bright pointillist foliage. This inspired convention, which evokes the fortuitous patterns on the inside of a geode, is one indication that painting is almost wholly by the hand of Purkhu himself. Overlaid on these trees are a series of delicate creepers with double rows of white and pink blossoms. These bursts of colour and the graceful arcs of the creepers behind add obvious visual sparkle to the painting. The artist closes off the composition on the right somewhat abruptly with the insertion of a jutting paste-coloured outcrop. He renders the sky in soft midtones of grey and forgoes the customary and textually prescribed bright moon. JS

- 1 According to B.N. Goswamy and E. Fischer, *Pahari Masters. Court Painters of Northern India*, Zurich, 1992, p. 368, Purkhu is named as the son of Dhummun of Kiru, the brother of Buddhu and Rattu, and the father of Ramdayal, Ramkishan, Chandanu, and Ruldu.
- 2 Goswamy and Fischer, *Pahari Masters*, p. 368.
- 3 Goswamy and Fischer, *Pahari Masters*, pp. 3689–370.
- 4 M. Dutt, ed. and trans., *A Prose English Translation of Harivamsha*, Calcutta, 1897 (available online).



15. Krishna slays Keshi, the Horse-Demon

Folio from a Dispersed *Harivamsha* Series, numbered 103 on the reverse

Punjab Hills, Kangra, attributed to Purkhu and his workshop, c. 1800–15

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

35.8 × 47.2 cm including border

Provenance

Private collection, New York, was acquired by the collector in 1958 from H.L. Bharany, in India

This second work from a dispersed Kangra-style series of the *Harivamsha* (Genealogy of Hari [Vishnu]) highlights not the romantic aspect of the adolescent Krishna, but the deity's inherently protective role in the universe. The mortal threat to cosmic equilibrium comes this time from Keshi, one of a series of demons sent by the evil king Kamsa to snuff out Krishna in his childhood and thus destroy the one prophesied to end his wicked rule. Assuming the form of a horse, Keshi begins to rampage in the vicinity of Gokula. He wreaks havoc wherever he wanders, feeding on the flesh of the *gopas* and driving their herds from the forest. His arrival at a village sends the *gopas* and their womenfolk rushing headlong to Krishna to beg for his intervention, though they are anxious that such a boy might be no match against such an all-powerful demon. Krishna confronts the enraged horse, 'as a cloud approaches the moon', a phrase in the text meant to invoke the utter domination of swallowing up one's foe. Stomping his feet, flashing his eyes, and foaming at the mouth, Keshi charges Krishna, landing a blow of his forelegs on his chest and biting his upper arm. Krishna responds by plunging one arm deep down the throat of the horse-demon, causing him to vomit blood and his teeth to shatter. Krishna thereupon flips over his lustrous adversary, pries apart his jaws, and tears the beast completely asunder. The villagers roar their approval at the demise of their scourge and laud Krishna for restoring safety to their community.

This painting, numbered 103 on the reverse, is the third illustration after the painting in Government Museum, Chandigarh (numbered 100), which depicts Keshi four times in its visual description of the devastation brought about by the horse-demon and the villagers imploring Krishna to come to their rescue. This means that there were two intervening illustrations of the episode of the slaying of Keshi between that painting and the apparent denouement seen here. This is indisputable evidence that the painting cycle of this *Harivamsha* series is both exceptionally dense and extensive.

The designer of this compelling work allocates fully half the composition to the dynamic hand-to-mouth struggle between Krishna and Keshi, cordoning off the arena of their epic confrontation with a series of dark trees and the curving shoreline. Krishna, again identified by a superfluous caption and wearing a conical hat with peacock-feather at the front to complement his canonical yellow *pitambara*, appears twice as he assails the horse-demon. His family – Nanda, Yashoda, and Balarama, all identified by captions – are front-row spectators, preceded only by a young *gopa*





who helpfully points towards the dramatic struggle. Behind them are seventeen apprehensive villagers huddled together, raising their hands to their mouths, macking their heads, and shielding their eyes as they look on nervously and turn to glance at each other. The variety of positions and gestures and the eagerness to venture truncated views of overlapping faces are hallmarks of a highly creative and technically proficient artist, who in this case can only be Purkhu. Even the two cows in the foreground strain their necks to behold Krishna dispatching the ferocious horse-demon.

It is clear that at least two artists executed this painting. In addition to the aforementioned figures, Purkhu, the master, also seems to have taken charge of certain features of the landscape, namely, the three clumps of elegant silver grass sprouting up along the shoreline, the subtle texture imparted to the grass by a flurry of short, abstract marks, the flowering creepers draped across the apace adjacent to the lower Krishna, and the captivating brushwood fence before the village. Purkhu also probably also claimed the middle tree in the very centre of the composition but delegated the three trees directly above and below the two Krishnas to an apprentice, perhaps of his four sons. Their dark cores are less nuanced tonally and their bright foliate clusters are never more than schematic oval clumps. Likewise, the birds inhabiting the trees seem rather hard and obtrusive and are probably a late garnish supplied by an assistant. Most obviously, the structure and rendering of the small-scale houses are cursory at best, with the texture of their thatch roofs reduced to only simple stripes. The streaky daytime sky is probably also the work of the junior artist, who thus contributed about a third of this painting. This kind of collaborative working method, in which the master asserts his natural prerogative of designing and executing the most important figures and passages and relegates the ancillary parts of the composition to an apprentice, is quite common in Indian painting, especially in series of such size and scope as this *Harivamsha*.

Few other paintings from this dispersed *Harivamsha* series rise to this level of accomplishment. Apart from the reportedly large number of folios presently in the Government Museum, Chandigarh, a representative selection of other illustrations is in the Museum Rietberg (RVI 1901, published in B.N. Goswamy and E. Fischer, *Masters of Indian Painting*, vol. 2, Zurich 2011, p. 726, fig. 5); Bonhams, New York, 20 July 2020, lot 835; Christie's, London, 10 June 2015, lot 71; Sotheby's, New York, 27 March 1991, lots 59, 60; and Sotheby's, New York, 21 September 1985, lot 62.

JS



**A Rainbow Lorikeet (*Tricholossus haematodus moluccanus*)
Perched on a Flowering Branch. Folio from the Impey Album
Company School, Patna, signed by Zayn al-Din, 1778**

Opaque pigments on Whatman paper

Folio 52.5 × 73 cm, with inscription 'In the collection of Lady Impey/Painted by [Shaikh Zayn-al-Din] Native of Patna 1778'

Provenance

Private collection, New York, acquired in 1987

The Rainbow Lorikeet is a species of parrot found in Australia and also, but to a lesser extent, in India. Its habitat is rainforest, coastal bush and woodland areas. The rainbow lorikeets are known to be territorial. They are bold, inquisitive, affectionate and cheeky, with big personalities for their small size.

Paintings of birds, animals and flowers had been an important Mughal genre since the time of Jahangir (r.1605–27), who was a keen amateur naturalist. Shaikh Zayn al-Din's studies reveal a thorough adaptation of Mughal technique to the conventions of British natural history painting and the larger format of the imported Whatman paper. He came from Azimabad, ie from Patna, the Mughal city on the Ganges north-west of Calcutta and was trained as a court painter in the naturalistic Mughal tradition almost certainly at Murshidabad, the capital of the Nawabs of Bengal where a court studio flourished in the 1750s and early 1760s. In a brief war with the East India Company in 1763–4, Nawab Qasim 'Ali moved his capital to Patna taking court artists with him and it is only from this time that there flourished for a short while a school of Mughal painting in the city, including most probably Shaikh Zayn al-Din among its artists.

By the early 1770s Zayn al-Din had moved to Calcutta where he worked for a number of British patrons before taking on the huge commission for Lady Impey (1749–1818) in 1774, depicting the fauna of India that she and her husband, Sir Elijah, Chief Justice of Bengal, had collected for their extensive garden. She commissioned three Patna artists, Sheikh Zayn al-Din being the most gifted and also the most prolific, to meticulously record their birds and animals which she wanted depicted life size when possible and also drawn from life. The Impeys shared the scholarly curiosity about India's life and culture prevailing among the circle of Warren Hastings (1732–1818). Another larger than life personality in India at the time and well known to Hastings was General Sir Eyre Coote who was commander of the British Army from 1780 until his death in Madras in 1783. He or his family owned this painting of a Rainbow Parakeet and 18 other paintings from the Impey album which were sold by his descendants at Mallett & Son, London in 1984.

Our watercolour comes from the set of originally 326 paintings by Zayn al-Din and his contemporaries, Bhavani Das and Ram Das, of which nearly 200 were studies of birds. These are now known as the Impey Album, and because of their large size and superb quality they are now considered to be among the finest Company School paintings. Their vitality derives from this balance between naturalistic drawing from life for British patronage and the perceptive portraiture which we equate with the Mughal tradition.





17. *Toona ciliata*, Indian Mahogany Flowering Tree

Calcutta, by the Master of the Fine Albums, c.1800

Opaque watercolour on watermarked paper

Folio 36 × 53 cm, inscribed *Pentandria Monognia* / *Cedrella Toona*, of Roxburgh / Toon

In Europe, botany became a fashionable pursuit in the second half of the 18th century due in part to the work of the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus. He made the study of botany much clearer by establishing an important *binomial nomenclature* (the naming of plants by two words – their genus (species) name followed by a name specific to the actual plant). Also, during this period botanists recognised the importance of scientifically accurate visual records of newly discovered plants from around the world. The drawings brought back to England by Joseph Banks (1743–1820) and Daniel Carl Solander (1736–1782) from Captain Cook's first voyage (1768–1771) had a tremendous impact on this field.

The present drawing depicts the *Cedrella Toona*, also known as *Toona ciliata*. It is a forest tree in the mahogany family which grows throughout South Asia. It is commonly known as the red cedar, Indian cedar or Indian Mahogany. The species can grow to around 200 ft in height and its trunk can reach 10 ft in girth, with large branches that create a spreading crown. The tree produces masses of white flowers that are very small and tubular in shape.

Our painting is part of a group of exceptionally fine botanical drawings made by unidentified artists for British patrons, living in the Calcutta area at the beginning of the 19th century. HJ Noltie refers to this artist, or studio of artists as the 'Master of the fine albums' (Noltie 2020, p. 81 & cat. 55). These paintings are stylistically linked to images created for William Roxburgh during his time as Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanical Garden because they all bear annotations and botanical nomenclatures linked with Roxburgh. The Roxburgh drawings are now in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, London.

There are three other known collections related to our painting in existence. A group latterly belonging to the Earl of Derby, and possibly originally commissioned by Richard Goodlad (1755–1821), who was connected with the Botanic Garden and the Asiatic Society in Calcutta (Chubb 2006). The second collection is an album of 58 botanical watercolours in the British Museum, called the 'Pearson album' after its last owner, Major Pearson. Finally, there is a very large collection at the Natural History Museum, called 'Indian Drawings Collection: Zoological/ Botanical.'

Two folios from the same album as ours are now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (Inv. nos. 2017.385 and 2017.362).





Portrait of a Bengali Hindu in a Landscape
Large Folio from the Rind Album

Company School, Calcutta, attributed to Chunni Lall, c. 1790

Opaque pigments on Whatman paper

98.2 × 67.5 cm

Inscribed on verso *JNR*

Provenance

Major James Nathaniel Rind (baptised 1753 and died 1814. India 1778–1801),
 thence by descent to

Mrs. S. Richardson and Mrs. S.M. Norman

Sotheby's, London, 13th July 1971, lot 48

Christie's, London, 21 November 1986, lot 6A

Private collection, New York, acquired in 1986

Large paintings of birds, animals and botanical studies by Indian artists working in the late 18th Century are well known and were done in significant numbers. But figure portraits like ours on this scale are almost unknown to Company School painting studies. In the past it has been suggested that our unusual portrait represents a holy man, but this is clearly untenable. Hindu holy men are generally ascetics, but our figure is rather different. The elegance of his demeanour and his simple but expensive attire suggests that he was a high caste Bengali of some distinction – but there are other clues to his identity. Our figure stands on the edge of the Hugli and sailing on the river, entirely out of scale, is a small East Indiaman. This suggests that he may have been a young Gomashta working for the East India Company in one of the settlements upriver from Calcutta dealing in goods for export. Bengali Vaishnavism, which goes back to Chaitanya (1486–1534) and his successors, is particularly prevalent in the district of Bengal now bordering Jharkhand – this gives us a clue to our Bengali's origins.

This exceptionally large watercolour was made for the Rind Album, compiled by Major James Nathaniel Rind (baptised 1753–1814). Born in Scotland, Rind travelled to India in 1778, where he was stationed until 1801. He held several posts during his time there, [see page bottom for the record of his career] but appears to have spent most of his employment on survey duty. It seems that Rind was based in Calcutta from 1793 to 1801.

Paintings from Rind's extensive album were first introduced to a wider audience at Sotheby's in 1971, when part of his collection was sold by his descendants, including our Portrait of a Bengali (lot 48). Other folios in the sale included depictions of fish, birds and plants. A second sale of paintings from the Rind Album took place at the same saleroom in 1985.

While many of Rind's paintings are relatively conventional, some are truly extraordinary. The Rind paintings included in Stuart Cary Welch's landmark 1978 exhibition of Company School paintings are of very different subject matter. Three are botanical





studies, one is an elegant depiction of a snake and one illustrates the eccentric sheep eater of Fategarh, Suza Geer Berah Geer, slowly devouring a sheep with his teeth, his face smeared with blood (Welch 1978, no 11 & ed. Dalrymple 2020, no 75). Rind, obviously fascinated by idiosyncratic subjects as well as more conventional botanical studies, must have therefore commissioned works from different artists or assembled his collection from several sources (Noltie 2020, p. 81). Some of Rind's paintings bear the initials 'J.N.R.' in pencil on the reverse. Among the most gifted artists working for Rind was Chunni Lall whose work was also acquired by Sir James MacGregor.

Folios from the Rind album are now widely dispersed, and paintings from his album are now in the collection of the British Museum, the British Library, the Harvard Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Museum of Asian Art (The Smithsonian), and the Princeton University Art Museum.

Major James Nathaniel Rind's Service Career

Lieutenant in the Bombay Marine from 17 August 1778 to September 1778

Appointed Cadet in the 18th Bengal Native Infantry 10 September 1778

One of the assistants to Major James Browne at Delhi in April 1785 and on survey of the Sikh country and neighbourhood of Delhi 1785-87

Lieutenant in the 17th Battalion Sepoys July 1787

Employed on survey duty 1787-Nagpur, Narbada River to Mirzapur, Ganges from Allahabad to Benares)

Transferred from the 17th Battalion to Adjutant and Quartermaster 1st Sepoy Brigade, 18 November 1793

Brigade Major, 1st Brigade, 15 November 1794 until January 1801

Captain 14th Native Infantry in 1798 and transferred to 17th Native Infantry

He was in the 18th Native Infantry 29 May 1800

Furloughed 4 April 1801 until retirement

Biographical research by the late J.P. Losty, with thanks to Malini Roy



Two Early Drawings of the Goddess Durga Mandir in Ramnagar

Pen and ink on laid paper, cat. 19 has a watermark of Taylors GR dating the paper to the period of 1770–1790s

Banaras, c. 1790

19 A view of the east façade of the Durga Mandir, Ramnagar

31.5 × 49.3 cm

20 A view of the south façade of the Durga Mandir, Ramnagar

31.5 × 48.7 cm

Provenance

Hartnoll & Eyre 1972

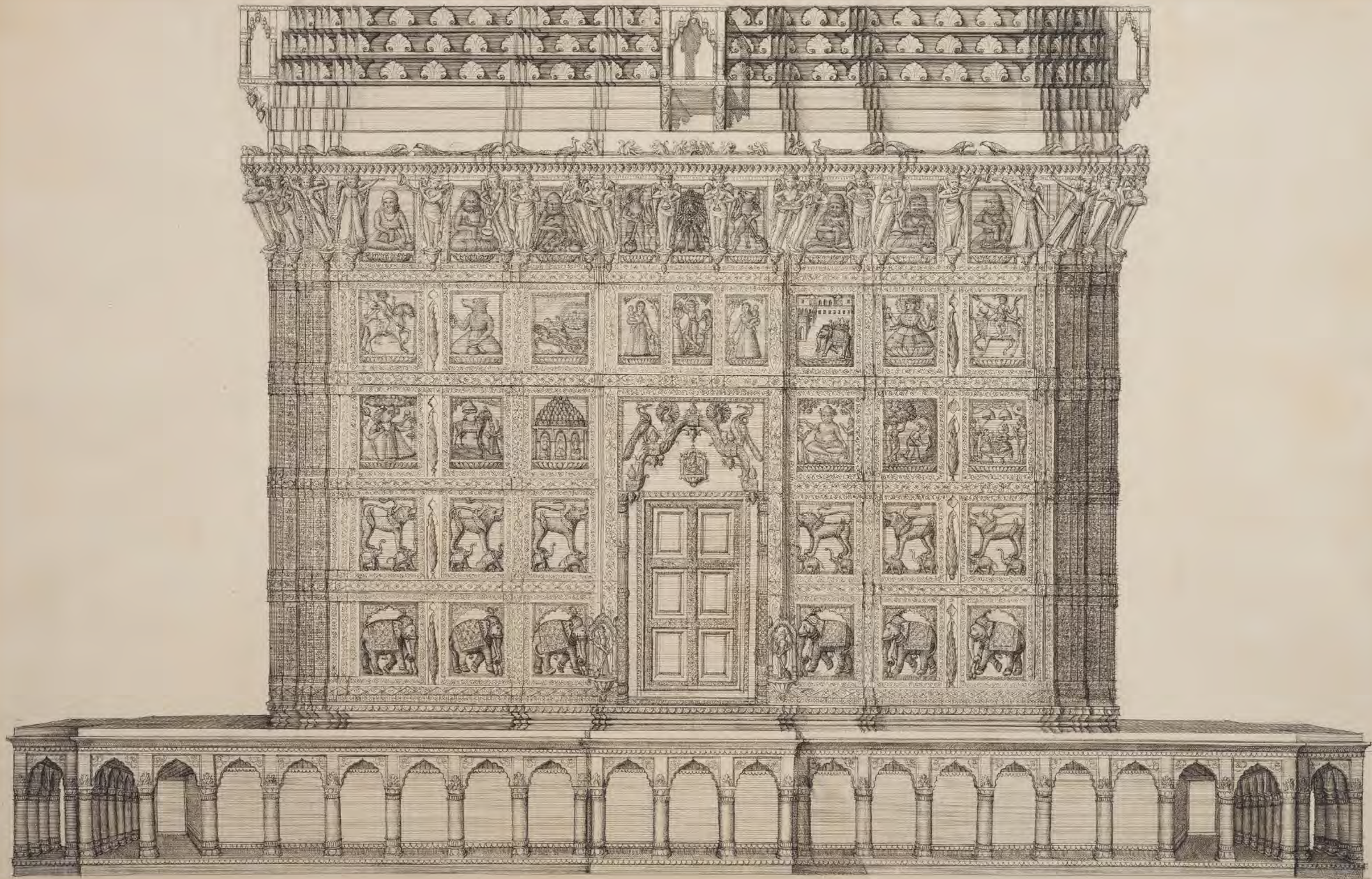
The Durga Mandir, a temple dedicated to the Hindu deity Durga, is in Ramnagar which lies across the Ganges from Banaras (Varanasi). It is said to be five hundred years old but the temple as it stands today is largely a building of the 18th century constructed on the order of Kashi Naresh Maharaja Balwant Singh, who reigned over the state between 1738 to 1770, then still a subject state of Awadh. It may be at this point that the temple was dedicated to Durga.

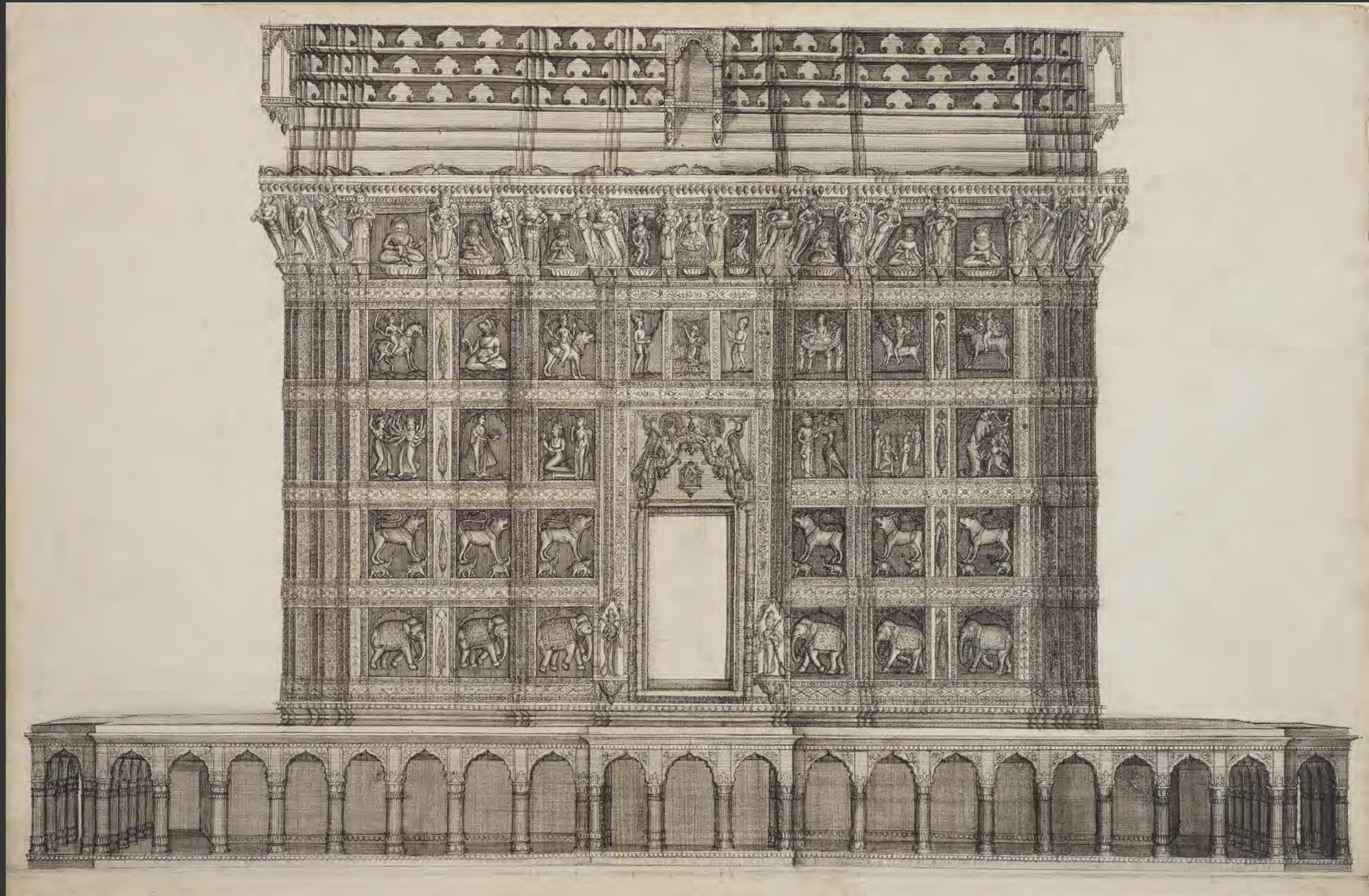
The temple was damaged by the British in 1778 not long after it was finished. The Maharaja escaped, and under the proxy rule of the British, a successor was appointed, who instigated the reconstruction of the temple. It may be that the restoration faltered before the tower section was completed. One account of this reconstruction mentions that the first Indian overseer of this project was unable to complete the top of the temple and threw himself off the building in despair. It is at this point that these drawings were made. The Daniells, visiting Banaras in 1788–89 and recorded the Durga Mandir in a drawing, in a similar partially rebuilt state (Sokoly and Ohta 2010, cat. 11, p.122).

Probably for political motives, Warren Hastings in 1782 instructed drawings to be carried out of the principal temples in Banaras by Lieutenant-Colonel John Garstin, half-brother of Robert Hyde Colebrooke and later to be his successor as Surveyor General of India. Our two drawings therefore must constitute one of the earliest architectural surveys of Indian monuments by a European.

Our two drawings are most probably also the work of Garstin's survey, either in his hand or, more likely, the work of an Indian draughtsman. Another series of six drawings of the Durga Mandir is held in the collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA 35465-8, 95532-3). This, dated 1810, includes one drawing of the temple's interior and five of the exterior, each of which have been inscribed with identifying inscriptions in English by a British hand. Although slightly later, four of the exterior drawings are identical in style and composition to ours.









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