

The Flower Garden : Indian Paintings 1600 - 1850
New York | 13 - 21 March 2015



The Flower Garden
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Asia Week New York
13 - 21 March 2015

Exhibition held at The Arader Gallery
1016 Madison Avenue
New York 10075



We would like to thank the following
people for their assistance in the making of this catalogue:

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Preface

The title *The Flower Garden* is inspired by a talk last year referring to the gardens of the Taj Mahal – a reflection of heaven on earth. The best Indian paintings and drawings are ‘mini gardens’ that evoke the sublime and the metaphysical in the viewer.

The emperor Jehangir’s memoirs of Kashmir reflect an intense engagement with flora, which traces its roots in the core of Islamic culture, and merges with sub-continental notions of fertility to create a new language. From the advent of the Mughal Empire, Flora erupts in Indian design across mediums, assuming new forms and takes a remarkable evolutionary quest.

It is a pleasure to present a group of classical Indian paintings for Asia week New York 2015 that approach the theme of the ‘Garden’ on more than one level – literal, metaphorical and symbolic. The works come from diverse courts of North, Central and Western India.

The selection of works includes an imperial painting from the *Zafarnama*, made for Akbar, a mystic who created an empire, a resplendent image of Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golconda, who adorns a garden upon his robe. Flora and paradisiac imagery flourish in four *Ragamala* paintings, visual representations of classical music, from the North Deccan and Bundi in Rajasthan. A recently discovered, penetrating Mughal portrait of a courtier from the Muhammad Shah period offers a window into an inner ‘garden’, also from the environs of Delhi a superb example of company painting from the Fraser album. Finally a vista of Shalimar Bagh from the *Polier Album*— is a literal recreation of paradise by the emperor-aesthete Nuruddin Jehangir.

Shubha & Prahlad Bubbar
2015

Timur’s Falconers Hunt Waterfowl at a Riverbank

A Folio from a Zafarnama
By the artist Khemkaran, made for the Emperor Akbar
Mughal India, circa 1598-1600
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper
Original manuscript folio: 18 x 9.6 cm
Re-margined folio: 28 x 19.5 cm

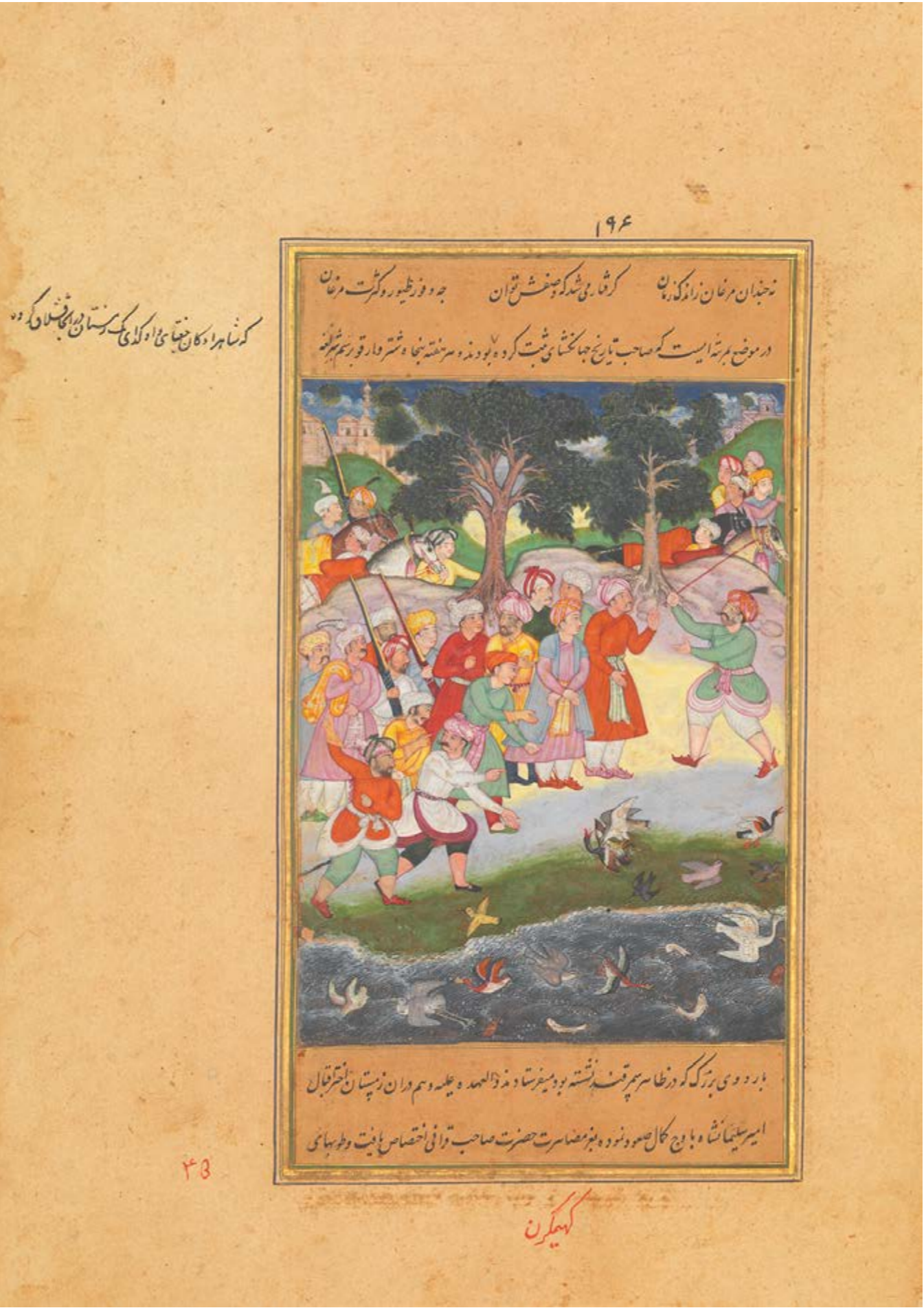
This folio comes from an illustrated manuscript of the *Zafarnama* made for the Mughal Emperor Akbar circa 1598-1600. Known to art historians since 1991 and thought to have over 90 illustrations, it recounts the history of the life of the Mughal’s ancestor Timur (r.1370-1405). This particular version was written by Sharaf al-Din ‘Ali Yazdi in 1425, under the direction of the Timurid prince Ibrahim Sultan. It is the most significant fifteenth century history of Timur and was much loved by the Mughals, who drew strongly on their illustrious ancestry as justification for their legitimacy to rule. This is reflected in Akbar’s commissioning of a series of dynastic histories during the 1580s and 1590s, including the *Baburnama* (c. 1590) (memoirs of Babur), the *Tarikh-i Alfi* (c. 1592) (a history of Islamic rulers since Muhammad) and the *Akbarnama* (c. 1590-95) (Akbar’s illustrated biography). The 1590s was a period of intense production and a crucial moment in the history of Mughal painting, as artists continued to experiment with naturalism and techniques of shading and perspective, forging a new and independent Mughal style.

Timur’s men gather for the hunt, the falconers poised at the frontline, their gloved hands extended as they launch their charges into flight. The waterfowl scatter in desperation to escape. In elegant *nasta’liq*, the accompanying text describes how every week, ‘fifty camels’ worth of birds were carried to Timur’s camp near Samarkand, so many that it would be ‘impossible to describe’.

An inscription below the painting attributes it to the artist Khemkaran. Recorded by Abu’l Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari* as one of the most famous artists working at Akbar’s court, he appears to have joined the atelier at an early date and is known to have worked on a large number of manuscripts during the 1580s and 1590s, including the *Darabnama* (c. 1580), *Razmnama* (c.1582- 86), *Timurnama* (c. 1584), *Baburnama* (c. 1590), *Khamisa of Nizami* of 1595 and both the V&A *Akbarnama* (c. 1590-95) and the Chester Beatty/ British Library *Akbarnama* of 1604.

In this folio, Khemkaran demonstrates his ability to combine drama and elegance. The scene is painted with a well-balanced palette and a particularly sensitive portrayal of flora and fauna. He retains the Persian preference for minimal spatial depth, the transition from foreground to background

asserted by landscape features. The figures communicate primarily through gesture, pointing and turning as they engage with one another. A degree of shading is used to give volume to their bodies through the folds and drapery of their clothes. This became increasingly popular as Mughal painting developed and artists experimented with European techniques of shading and modeling. The pale yellow of the mid-ground illuminates the surface on which the crowd gathers, highlighting the array of brightly coloured textiles. Immediately recognizable is Khemkaran’s treatment of the sky, a characteristic feature of his work. The pale yellow horizon transitions through white clouds to dark, indigo blue. His brush strokes provide texture, giving a sense of volume and energy to the clouds. The trees are rendered with a similar intensity, the trunks strongly defined and enlivened with a mottled surface texture. Their dark, bushy leaves are differentiated with tiny clusters of radiating lines. Beneath are rocks that are large and freely drawn. The river, densely rippled, flows with urgency.





References:

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Provenance:

Private Collection, UK

Sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golconda

Golconda, Deccan, India. Circa 1640
Opaque pigments with gold on paper.
19.1 x 8.7 cm

[Your] glory illuminates like moonbeams
And by your munificence the darwish becomes rich.
Your benevolence is alchemy and
touches this servant in this way.
Every heart that it reaches turns
to gold through alchemy.

A sublime atmosphere is evoked as the artist combines elegance and sensitivity within this portrait of the seventh ruler of the kingdom of Golconda. Ruling for nearly fifty years during a most important period for Deccani art, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah has been regarded as the pre-eminent patron of miniature painting in Golconda's history.

Standing tall against a pale background, his right hand rests on a *katar* tucked in his jewelled sash and a long sword in a pale blue scabbard hangs across his side. The fingers of his left hand gently clasp a fragrant blossom, which he holds before him. Draped across his shoulders, an orange and gold striped scarf cascades down either side of his *jama*. His typical Golconda turban, secured with a wide gold band is embellished with an aigrette.

There is a great delight in the portrayal of his costume, his long gold *jama* is decorated with exquisite purple brocade flowers. The stiff folds of the material are typical of those painted by Deccani artists, yet they do not compromise the decoration on the garment. His pale gold *patka*, also adorned with elegant floral sprays, is finished with a row of fine black tassels. While his shoes are plain, the decoration on his purple *paijama* continues the floral theme. Their rippling folds outlined in silver add texture and volume to the fabric. The austere background intensifies the magnificence of his costume, while the Mughal inspired halo and absence of a ground line imbues the painting with a supernal quality.





The present work may be compared with a similar portrait of Sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah in the Victoria and Albert Museum (I.S. 18-1980). Mughal influenced portraits showing likenesses of the sultans emerged in Golconda during the 1630s. With full lips, a broad nose and a distinctive beard, the present figure is instantly recognisable as 'Abdullah Qutb Shah. However the portrait still maintains elements, such as a bold use of line and a stylisation to the features, which are typical attributes of the evocative Deccani style. The use of powder blue, hot oranges and warm gold tones is also typical of paintings from the region. In combining Mughal realism with Deccani sensibility, the portrait is at once majestic, refined and otherworldly.

Published:

Seyller, John and Konrad Seitz (ed.) *Mughal and Deccani Paintings: The Eva and Konrad Seitz Collection of Indian Miniatures*. Museum Rietberg, Switzerland, 2011, p. 110

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Welch, Stuart Carey. *A Flower from Every Meadow: Indian Paintings from American Collections*. New York, 1973.
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Provenance:

The Eva and Konrad Seitz Collection.

A Spirited Arabesque

Bijapur, Deccan, circa 1650

Brush drawing on paper

Full page: 24 x 13.5 cm

Drawing: 20.4 x 9.5 cm

In this intricate design, fine stems unwind in an abundance of blossoming flowers. Vines curve back and forth to create two central cartouches, each of which divides into an array of subsidiary stems. Clusters of serrated leaves shroud them, interspersed with tiny 'flaming pearls'.

This floral reverie is enlivened by inhabitants of the animal kingdom. Nestled amongst the magical blooms, feline and canine heads clutch leaves in their mouths. The head of a magnificent dragon emerges from a bud of twisting petals, its jaws agape with leaves spilling from it like flames. A frontally depicted human face of a *peri* (fairy) or angel, stares out from amongst the leaves.

The seamless combination of forms - floral, animal, worldly and mythical – is executed with great sophistication. Each component merges continuously with the next; flowers blossom from animal heads and vice versa in a spirited expression of ornament and creative fancy. The line is precise, lending clarity to the design, its complexity tempered by a strong sense of symmetry and balance.

Closely comparable in style is a painting in the collection of Howard Hodgkin, a 'Floral Vase' attributed to Bijapur circa 1650 (see Topsfield 2012, cat. 43, p. 108). It displays similar vegetal forms, notably the serrated leaves and the elaborate flower buds. While it also has the face of a *peri* surrounded by petals, it does not contain the animal heads that populate the branches of the present drawing.

The incorporation of animal heads into floral arabesques is known as the '*wag-wag*' design, based upon associations with the myth of the *wag-wag* tree. It has a long history in Persian ornament and was taken up by artists of the Mughal and Deccani courts. They often combine the heavenly with the grotesque, exemplified here by the peaceful angel and fearsome dragon, presenting the cosmic dualities of good and evil, light and dark, as one, interconnected whole.



Deccani painting, particularly from the kingdom of Bijapur, is known for its vitality, creativity and spiritual undertones, fuelled by the influence of Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam. Scrolling flowers such as these draw upon the Islamic concept of the garden of Paradise, populated here with mythical creatures in an otherworldly expression of spiritual transcendence. Their ornate beauty acts as a metaphor for the spiritual perfection to which an individual may aspire.

This drawing would have been used as a preparatory design, perhaps for manuscript illumination or metalware. Other related examples include an inhabited arabesque in the collection of Jagdish and Kamila Mittal and one in the David Collection, Copenhagen (see P. Bubbar, *Pleasures of the Princes*, 2001, cat. 4).

References:

Topsfield, A. & M. Beach. *Indian Paintings and Drawings from the Collection of Howard Hodgkin*. Thames & Hudson: London, 1991.

Topsfield, A. *Visions of Mughal India: The Collection of Howard Hodgkin*. Oxford: The Ashmolean Museum, 2012.

Weinstein, L. 'Mystics, Flowers and Mythical Creatures: Extraordinary Elements in Three Deccani Drawings' in P. Bubbar ed. *Pleasures of the Princes: Indian Paintings 1600-1900*. London, Prahlad Bubbar, 2011).



A Rajput Prince on a Hunt

Sawar, Rajasthan.

Circa 1690.

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper.

Against a pale green background, the nobleman is portrayed on horseback, perhaps on the way to a *shikar*. There is a restraint in the decorations of the horse, particularly the saddle and the straps, the Maharaja holds a spear in his right hand, the end of which is carefully tucked between the strap tied to the back of the horse. He also carries a *Katar* or punch dagger and a sword. The white muslin clothes and pale green are indications of the summer months.

There is inspiration in the picture. The bold use of colours on the horse, and the elegant finely attired rider, present a beautiful contrast. There is an essential use of gold on the turban, the sash and the weapons, but a great balance in the unusual combinations of colour. The orange on burnt sienna, the white feather with blue shading against a pale green, the tassels of different forms, the mane braided with orange lace with delicate pompoms at the ends, the transparency of the beautiful muslin *jama* against the flat bold colours, a *Jadau* pendant on a delicate red thread worn on it, the artist has indeed succeeded to create variety and movement in an otherwise formulaic style of portraiture.

Mughal influence is apparent in the composition of painting, as well as the costumes- in the pale green background, the shape of the turban, the motifs on the golden sash, and the white muslin transparent costume. Painting at Sawar was influenced by Bundi and Mewar with a simplified treatment of line and inspired depictions of animals and birds. Portraits often have angular, small heads. Stylistically related works were painted at Isarda and later at Ragogarh.

References:

Pasricha, *Painting at Sawar and Isarda in the 17th century*.
1982



Ragini Bhupali

Gouache and gold on paper
 Circa 1670-80
 North Deccan, possibly Burhanpur
 37 x 25.5 cm



The elegant female protagonist of the scene is attended by a lady, who bears a fly whisk in hand. She sits in a verdant landscape, on a blue rug with white and gold arabesque, and an olive green border, in conversation with two other ladies. The central figure is visibly larger than the others, and assumes a place of prominence. The women all have elongated, large eyes. They are heavily ornamented and wear short blouses and transparent *odhnis*. The *odhnis* of all but the central figure look like *bandhani* (tie and die) garments that are traditionally made in Western India.

This setting is framed by a floral trellis. The sky is a deep blue of the early evening, in a distinct lapis colour, characteristic of the Deccan. The golden trellis seems to be glistening under the light of the setting sun. This dominant landscape is separated from the foreground where three pairs of golden ducks are nestled among flower blossoms by a stream of swirling water. However, the painting is two-dimensional and the artist has made no attempt to create a realistic spatial environment. The use of vibrant colours has resulted in an almost magical landscape that is lush with greenery and flowers.

This is the iconographic representation of Ragini Bhupali, shown as a beautiful woman who longs for her lover. The painting therefore depicts the *vipralambha bhava* of the *shringar rasa*, which is the longing caused by separation. This folio is from a well-known ragamala series that is attributed to 1670-80 from the North Deccan region. North Deccan had many provincial centres where painting flourished in its own unique style combining elements of the North (Rajasthan, and Mughal) along with those of the Deccan. This folio comes from one such centre, possibly Burhanpur, as proposed by John Seyller, an important provincial capital for the Mughals from the early 17th century onwards which attracted painters from different regions, resulting in a evocative amalgamation of regional styles.

Each Raga and Ragini has a prescribed time of day when it is meant to be performed. Ragini Bhupali is a post-sunset ragini to be performed in the early evening, and the colour of the sky is an allusion to this. There are two lines of a Sanskrit inscription on an un-coloured panel above the painting that describe the fair-skinned *nayika* and her longing for her lover.

The paintings from this series, like the current one, are based on the Kshemakarna system of Ragas, which is found in Pahari, as well as Deccani sets of Ragamala paintings but not in Rajasthan. While there are very few Rajasthani/ Western Indian elements in this painting, such as the black pom-poms, it predominantly has features that we associate with Deccani painting. The use of gold in abundance, the lapis blue, the small faces with full cheeks are all associated with the region. The profusion of flowers and the heavy use of geometric and floral motifs are other features that are typical of the Deccan. While in Rajasthani paintings, the background tends to be sparse, here patterns and geometrical forms are used to fill up the blank spaces. The general palette is much softer, as the colours are pastel vis-à-vis the bright reds and yellows of Rajasthani paintings. A sense of the 'surreal', which is characteristic of Deccan paintings has been created by the artist.

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 Seyller, John. *Mughal and Deccani Paintings*. Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2010
 Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*. London: Sotheby Publications, 1983

Provenance:

Private collection, France.



Gundagri Ragini

North Deccan, possibly Burhanpur

Circa 1670–1680

Gouache and gold on paper

37 x 25.5 cm

In a lush green landscape, a lady dressed in red holding a long-stemmed flower in her hand, walks towards an attendant who holds up a basket as if offering something. A second female attendant stands on the verandah of the pavilion behind the central figure with a flywhisk in hand. Each of the three women is adorned in heavy jewelry from head to toe. They wear short blouses and transparent *odhnis*. The lady in red, who is the protagonist this painting, is larger than the others. The bright red of her costume, in contrast to the paler tones of her surroundings is a clever visual device that catches the eye of the viewer, making her the focus.

The entire scene is set in a plantain grove where the trees bear fruit in plenty. All around the trees, the grass is dotted with abundant flowers in pastel pink, orange, lilac, yellow and blue. The blue of the sky appears to hint at the early hours of the evening. As with other folios from this set, the artist has used the architectural elements as opportunities to decorate the scene. He uses radiant colours and elaborate patterns to enhance the aesthetic.

This painting of Gundagri Ragini, a ragini of Raga Malkos comes from the same Ragamala set as the Bhupali Ragini. It is a known Ragamala series that has been attributed to the North Deccan region, from around 1670-80. It probably comes from the centre of Burhanpur, which was an important Mughal outpost where artists from different regions worked. This ragini is iconographically represented as a fair-skinned woman with loosened hair, dressed in red and walking through a plantain forest. An uncoloured panel, towards the top, carries two lines of inscription in the Devanagari script in Sanskrit. It describes the physical attributes of the heroine of this scene, the *nayika*- her fair skin, her flowing hair, her hips. It also describes her meditative state as her thoughts are focused on her lover.





The liberal use of gold with pastel colours, the treatment of the architecture and the deliberate lack of naturalism in favor of a more paradisiacal, dream-like quality are distinct features of the Deccan style which are evident in this painting. In all folios from this Ragamala set, there is a two-dimensional quality to the paintings and spatial accuracy has not been the concern of the painter. Some plantain trees in the background seem not to have any roots in the ground and the proportions of the figures have not been naturalistically rendered.

This particular ragini seems to be one that is no longer sung or played, as has been the case with many of the ragas and raginis whose visual renditions we find from the period when Ragamala paintings were being widely produced.

References:

- Ebeling, Klaus. *Ragamala Painting* Basel: Ravi Kumar, 1973
 Navina N. Haidar and Marika Sardar (ed.), *Sultans of the South Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011
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 Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*. London: Sotheby Publications, 1983

Provenance:

Private collection, France.

Ragini Desvarari

Gouache and gold on paper
North Deccan. Aurangabad
Circa 1680
22 x14.5 cm

The painting depicts a terrace with a pavilion where a *nayika*, sits on a bed propped against a cylindrical cushion. A footstool lies before the bed, which slants to the left, possibly in an attempt by the artist to suggest perspective. She sits with her arms stretched overhead, as her body twists sideways, in a classic Indian *tribhanga* pose. The attendant to her right holds up a mirror in which she appears to be looking at her reflection. A second attendant to her left holds up a tray - possibly with some items for toilette. The faces of all three women are in profile and they all wear heavy jewellery, including *bazuband* (armlets) with tassles - a feature of paintings from some regions of Rajasthan such as Sirohi. Behind the ladies to the left is another bed with scattered cushions, and to the right, against a solid yellow background are the tops of tall, flower-bearing trees.

This iconographic representation is that of Ragini Desvarari, sometimes called Ragini Varari. There is no verse inscribed on this painting, however the iconography of the *nayika* helps us identify it. In fact on another painting of the same ragini is a verse that describes her as the fair one who twists like a creeper. She stretches her arms upward as she pines for her lover, and longs to be reunited with him.

The sky in the painting looks cloudy and stormy. Interestingly this is a feature associated with the family of Raga Megh which is a monsoonal raga. This could perhaps mean that the painting might be read as a visual rendition of the Gurjari ragini which is a ragini of Raga Megh.

This painting is very fine, yet unusual with its many unique features. The slender, elongated bodies and the thin and long nose seem to bear stylistic parallels with early Kishangarh painting perhaps with roots in Golconda to begin with. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period noted for



a flourishing community of itinerant artists, it is most likely that this painting was made at Aurangabad, a vibrant center and melting pot between Rajasthan, Gujarat and the South.

The border of the painting is adorned with a scroll of large, bright yellow flowers on a blue background. Such borders are also seen in Rajasthani and Gujarat paintings from the mid 17th century onwards.

References:

Ebeling, Klaus. *Ragamala Painting*, Basel: Ravi Kumar, 1973

Navina N. Haidar and Marika Sardar (ed.), *Sultans of the South Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011

Seyller, John. *Mughal and Deccani Paintings*. Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2010

Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*. London: Sotheby Publications, 1983

Provenance:

Private collection, France.



Gaund Malhar Ragini

Gouache on paper
Bundi, Rajasthan. India
Circa 1680-1700
20 x 12 cm
27.5 x 19.5 cm including border

Perhaps one of the finest cases of synesthesia can be made with Ragamala paintings. Ragamala paintings are the visual codification of the emotions associated with various ragas of classical music. Every Raga has several wives or Raginis and in some traditions, Ragaputras (sons of Ragas), each of which is associated with a specific mood, resulting from the season and the time of the day at which it is to be performed. Ragamala paintings were widely produced between the 16th and 18th centuries in Rajasthan, Central India and the Deccan regions.

The current painting from the Bundi region of Rajasthan depicts the Gaund Malhar Ragini which is iconographically represented as an ascetic seated cross-legged on a tiger skin in a pavilion as the central subject. The bright orange of the tiger skin draws the viewer's eye inward as the rest of the painting makes use of a darker palette. The ascetic who has a slender frame is wearing a soft pink *dhori* (lower garment) with gold borders. His eyes are languid and he has a receding chin. His forehead is smeared with saffron paste and strings of delicate pearls are wrapped around his topknot and hang loosely around his neck. He also wears earrings and armlets. A staff is propped up under his left arm, while a gold *kamandala* (water pot) rests by his right knee.

He occupies a pavilion topped by a dome and a gold finial, with small steps leading up to it. There is a clear lack of spatial naturalism as the steps and the ascetic himself are disproportionate with the pavilion, which towers above a small pond. The silver waters of the pond are sprinkled with lotus blossoms and are rife with flora and fauna. Ducks, fish, a tortoise, frogs, and stocks are all seen in the rippling waters. Behind the pond is a lush green landscape and pairs of birds flutter out of the trees. Golden vines wrapped around trees, a marked feature of Bundi paintings are also visible. The painting is brought alive with the profusion of creatures that dot the scene—bird nests hang from the tall tree beside the



pond while a pair of peacocks, harbingers of rain, are seen on the dome. The sky is grey and overcast with wavy lines of gold. Gaund Malhar Ragini is associated with rain, and the mood is also evoked by the dark tempestuous skies. The artist makes clever use of colour in order to create an atmosphere of rain. The palette is soft and largely makes use of muted tones. The painting is framed by a red border and has a line of inscription in Devanagari on a yellow background on top.

Gaund Malhar or Gor Malhar Ragini as it is sometimes called, often does not actually include rain as an iconographic feature. In fact, there is a lack of consistency in its iconographic treatment across regions and time. This iconography of an ascetic seated in a pavilion in a pond for Gaund Malhar Ragini is specific to the Bundi region. The Bundi region is famed for its Chunar Ragamala series which was produced under Raja Bhoj Singh, as early as the late 16th century. This series is stylistically significant not only because it anticipates the style of the later Bundi paintings, but more importantly because it owes a clear debt to Mughal influence of the Akbar period. The training that the artists must have received from Mughal painters is evident in the format and proportion of the paintings, in the decoration of the borders and in the naturalistic treatment of the skies and landscapes.

References:

Ebeling, Klaus. *Ragamala Painting* Basel: Ravi Kumar, 1973
Beach, Milo Cleveland. *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota*, Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1974.

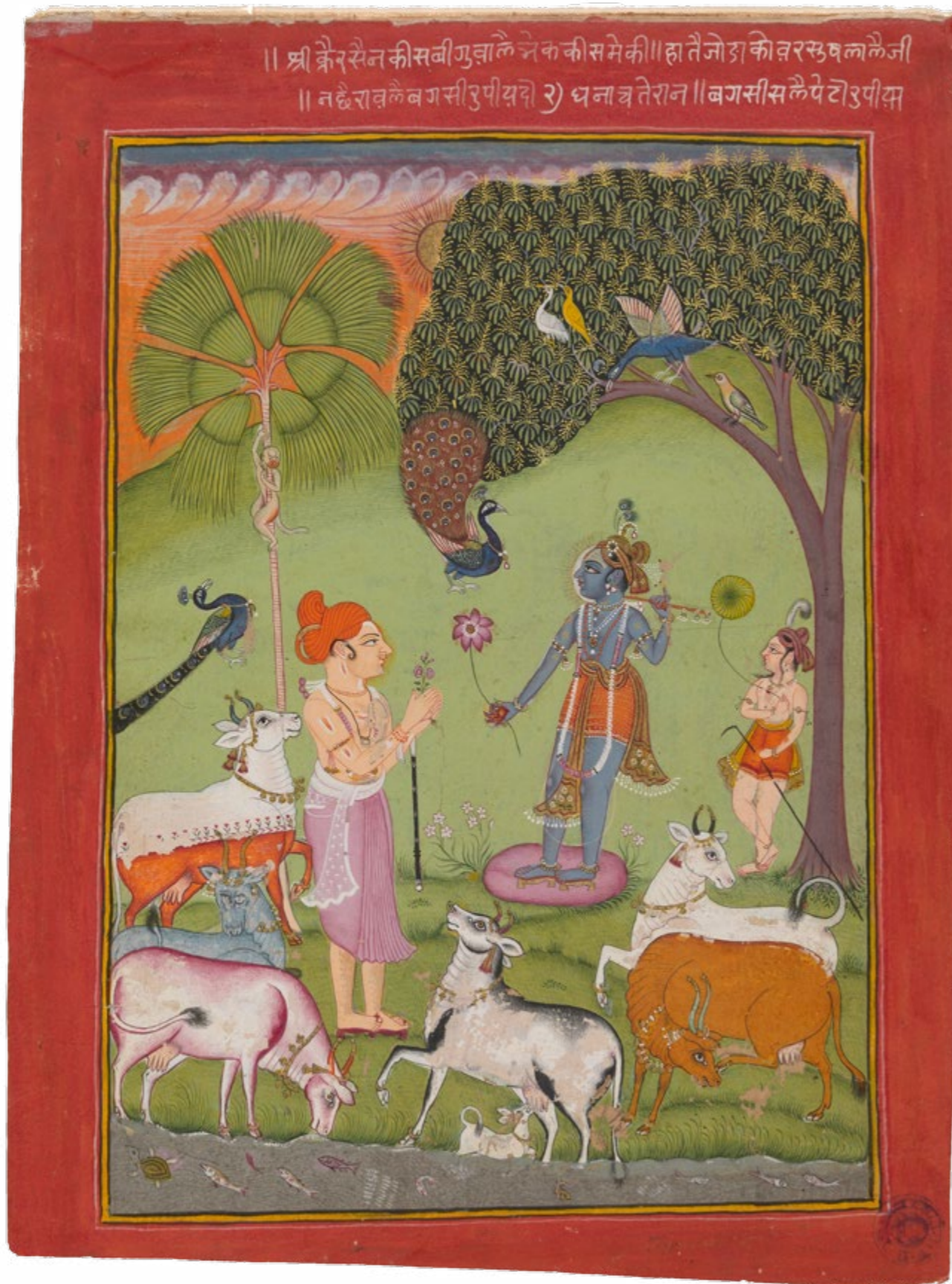
Provenance:

Private collection, France.



Krishna Plays his Flute

Uniara or Bundi, Rajasthan, circa 1750
Opaque watercolours and gold on paper
29.5 x 22 cm



Krishna plays his flute amongst a verdant landscape. An inscription on the upper border names the central devotee as 'Kunwar Sukh Lal ji', who 'stands with folded hands'. He clasps his hands in worship while a cowherd watches from beneath a nearby tree. Both hold flowers as offerings to the deity. Krishna himself is defined by his characteristic blue skin and flute; he holds a lotus flower in reference to his association with Vishnu and is adorned with garlands and pearls. The inscription tells us that two rupees were given to the artist 'Dhanna' by 'Nachche Rao'.

Particular delight has been taken in the depiction of the animals. First to engage the viewer are the cows that gather at the waters edge. A jovial troupe, they kick their heels and shake their heads in response to Krishna's presence. Others occupy themselves with more mundane tasks, sipping the river's silver waters and reaching for their mother's milk. Two elegant peacocks gather to witness Krishna's divine play, while birds perch and beat their wings in the tree above. A mischievous monkey, wrapped around the narrow trunk of a radiant palm, stops to gaze at Krishna's glory. The time is sunset, evoked by the vibrant orange sky and gold of the setting sun.

Uniara is a small state bordering Jaipur, Bundi and Kota. Closely allied to Jaipur, the rulers of Uniara were members of the Naruka clan, a subsidiary branch of the Kacchawaha dynasty of Amber. Painting at Uniara flourished under the patronage of Sardar Singh I (d.1777), who commissioned a significant Bhagavata Purana in the Rao Raja Rajendra Singh Uniara Collection. The colophon states that the manuscript is the work of the artist Mira Bagas and completed in 1759. The style of painting at Uniara during this period shows considerable influence from the neighbouring state of Bundi. Differences may be found, however, in the peculiarities associated with the style of Mira Bagas, evident here in the particular vitality of the animals and landscape features. This painting is related stylistically to a work by Mira Bagas entitled 'Utka Nayika' (Woman Waiting for her Lover), dated c. 1760 and published by Milo Beach in *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota*, 1974. (fig. 54, p. LIII).

Reference:

Milo Beach, *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1974).



Khuda Baksh Khan

Mughal India. Circa 1730

Brush drawing on paper

31 x 22 cm

Inscription in nasta-liq: 'Khuda Baksh Khan'

Quasi life size portraits are relatively rare in Indian art . The present brush drawing depicts the courtier 'Khuda Baksh Khan' in three-quarters, wearing a tall turban in vogue during the Aurangzeb period and the early part of Muhammad Shah's reign. Executed with a confident and sensitive line this portrait captures the spirit of the sitter and offers a vivid glimpse in time.

The artist, through the use of shading and modelling as well as the choice of the pose, is successful in making the figure emerge from the plane. The use of chiaroscuro highlights individual features and creates volume and depth. Apart from its technique alone the portrait exhibits, an interest in portraiture as seen in Europe – with an emphasis on keen observation and a 'naturalistic' representation of scale and proportion.

Khuda Baksh Khan's countenance, with a flowing beard, and sensitive eyes suggests a man of wisdom. Judging from his jewels, including multiple strings of natural pearls interspersed by coloured gemstones, a large faceted gemstone and drop decorating his turban, we can infer that he was a man of stature and importance, possibly a prince.

With the reign of Muhammad Shah an interest in painting returned to the capital. His master painter 'Chitarman' produced wonderful images of the Emperor's life and excelled in the art of portraiture. A substantial drawing attributed to Kalyan Das (Chitarman) now in the Hodgkin collection, depicting Prince Azam Shah entering the city of Ahmendabad, shares stylistic similarities.

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Provenance:

Private collection UK.



Guru Tegh Bahadur

Family workshop of Nainsukh of Guler
 Circa 1790
 Opaque watercolour on paper
 20 x 14cm

Guru Tegh Bahadur (1661-1675), the ninth Sikh Guru, sits in meditative contemplation. Positioned in the centre of a curved window frame, he is bordered at top and bottom by vertically striped textiles. A monochrome striped curtain with orange border hangs above while the floor is covered in rich, dark rose and burgundy. Combined with his bright yellow *jama* and the orange of the attendant's shield, it is a particularly vibrant painting from the series.

The body of the Guru has been sensitively rendered to give the impression of volume. Small details, such as the slight curve of the stomach above his belt and the fine pleats in his skirt, add a degree of naturalism to his form. He wears a *kara* on each wrist, the iron bracelet that represents courage and symbolises oneness with god. A *peshkabz* dagger lies beside him on a cushion and a white muslin cloth has been placed in front of him. It is an idealised vision, conceived to effectively convey the divinity and grace of Tegh Bahadur. His hands rest elegantly as he gazes forward, steady and serene.

It is in the portrait of his attendant that we see the extent of the mastery of this artist working in the first generation after Nainsukh. He stands behind waving a fly-whisk and holding a sword and shield, attesting to the Guru's renown as a fine swordsman, while looking towards Tegh Bahadur with an expression of gentle adoration. Through his wide, heavily lidded eyes and soft smile he exudes the very devotion that these portraits seek to inspire. His features are accurately balanced and made of harmonious curves. This intensely lyrical and idealised approach to portraiture derives from the style of Nainsukh and was proliferated thereafter by his descendants. This example relates to paintings attributed to Chamba, which are likely to have been painted by Nikka, Nainsukh's son, who moved there circa 1780.



Guru Tegh Bahadur was trained in the martial arts of archery and horsemanship and the name Tegh Bahadur (Mighty Of The Sword), was given to him by Guru Hargobind after he had shown his valour in a battle against the Mughals. Prolonged spells of seclusion and contemplation are said to have given him a deep mystical temperament and much of his poetry is included in the Guru Granth Sahib. He taught liberation from attachment, fear and dependence and believed that strength should be gained through truth, worship, sacrifice and knowledge. His refusal to convert to Islam under the order of Aurangzeb led to his death in 1675. It was recognised that Guru Tegh Bahadur gave his life for freedom of religion, ensuring that Hindus and other non-Muslims in India were able to follow and practice their beliefs without fear of persecution. Following his martyr's death it is said that a great storm broke out over Delhi.

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Archer, W.G. *Paintings of the Sikhs*. London, 1966. Figure 6.

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Provenance:

Mohan Singh Collection, India, early 20th century – 1966
Private Collection, New Zealand, 1968-2013



A Court Beauty

Kishangarh, Rajasthan, early 19th century
Opaque watercolours and gold on paper
32 x 24 cm

This painting portrays an idealised beauty, as conceived by artists at the kingdom of Kishangarh. Closely related to the renowned image of the courtesan 'Bani Thani' in the Kishangarh Royal Collection, it is evidence of the continued popularity of a theme that celebrated the female form in large, stylised portraits. This elegant figure represents an early nineteenth-century interpretation of the characteristic Kishangarh style, developed in the mid-eighteenth century by leading artists such as Bhavanidas and Nihal Chand. Their sensual, attenuated figures, romantic sensibility and lyrical execution made Kishangarh one of the most celebrated schools of painting in Rajasthan.

A young girl of unparalleled beauty, Bani Thani was the great love of Maharaja Sawant Singh (r.1748-57). A poet-prince and ardent devotee of Krishna, he was trained in the arts of painting and literature, writing poetry under the name of Nagari Das. Their romance was documented by the court artists of the time in portraits where they were represented as Radha and Krishna, the quintessential lovers of the Vaishnava tradition. In this role the Maharaja was associated with the virtues of Krishna while their love was exalted in a metaphor for religious devotion and union with the divine.

The leading artists at Kishangarh infused the technical finesse of the contemporary Mughal style with a powerful emotional intensity and increasing stylisation, inspired by the ardent Vaishnavism of the court of Sawant Singh and cult of Krishna worship. Here we see the ideal female form distinguished by an elongated face, large, lotus-shaped eye and arched brow in the shape of a drawn bow. The nose is slender, the lips resting in a gentle pout and the chin sharp. Black hair frames the features, falling in delicate curls. The mood is languid and serene. As in the famous portrait of Bani Thani, the figure holds her transparent shawl in one hand and two lotus buds in the other. She is draped in cascading jewels and adorned with gold.

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Hāmāvarān' Releases Kay Kavus to Rustam

A folio from a Shahnameh of Ferdowsi

Mughal India, circa 1775 - 1800

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper Folio: 39 x 27 cm

Miniature: 17 x 14.5 cm

This folio from the Shahnameh chapter 'Kay Kavus fights the king of Hāmāvarān' (Yemen), depicts the moment following an exhausting battle when the king of Hāmāvarān concedes defeat and brings Kay Kavus and his army to Rustam.

Encircled by his loyal soldiers, Rustam presides over the scene. Wearing his characteristic tiger pelt tunic, a tiger face on his helmet and riding his saffron coloured horse, Rakhsh, he is instantly recognisable. He wears fine gold armour, with a dagger in his belt and holds a long sword in his left hand. He is also clasping a rope wound around the wrists of a captive man. Stripped of his helmet and weapons, the man bows his head dutifully in acceptance of his fate. With a resolute expression, Rustam gestures toward Hāmāvarān. The defeated Arab King wears an embroidered orange tunic, a domed helmet and has retained his sword and quiver full of arrows. As he presses his hands together and looks up toward Rustam, his forlorn expression conveys the sense of his heavy defeat. Behind Hāmāvarān, a groom holds his horse, which is still supporting full armour, inferring that battle has only recently been terminated.

A group of foot soldiers encircle the men. Accompanied by armed guards, their hands are tied behind their backs as they march despondently. At the front of the group, a soldier leads Kay Kavus toward Rustam. His long grey beard and prominent position distinguishes him from the other prisoners, who turn their heads toward him, identifying him as a principal character. In the furthest row of soldiers, Rustam's horsemen appear resolute holding spears, battle standards and flags as they turn their heads toward one another in discussion.

Employing communicative gestures such as this, the painter adeptly guides the viewer through the unfolding narrative. The characters' sensitive portraits convey a range of expressions, which heighten the tension within the scene. A cohesive palette of soft oranges, bright yellows and dusky purples is enhanced by fine ornamental details on the textiles and fabrics and landscape. An abundance of gold details suggest the work was produced for an affluent patron.

A period of political stability in Delhi during the late eighteenth century was marked by a revival in painting and manuscript illustration. Artists drew upon pre-existing Mughal painterly techniques while imbuing their works with a contemporary air of vitality.

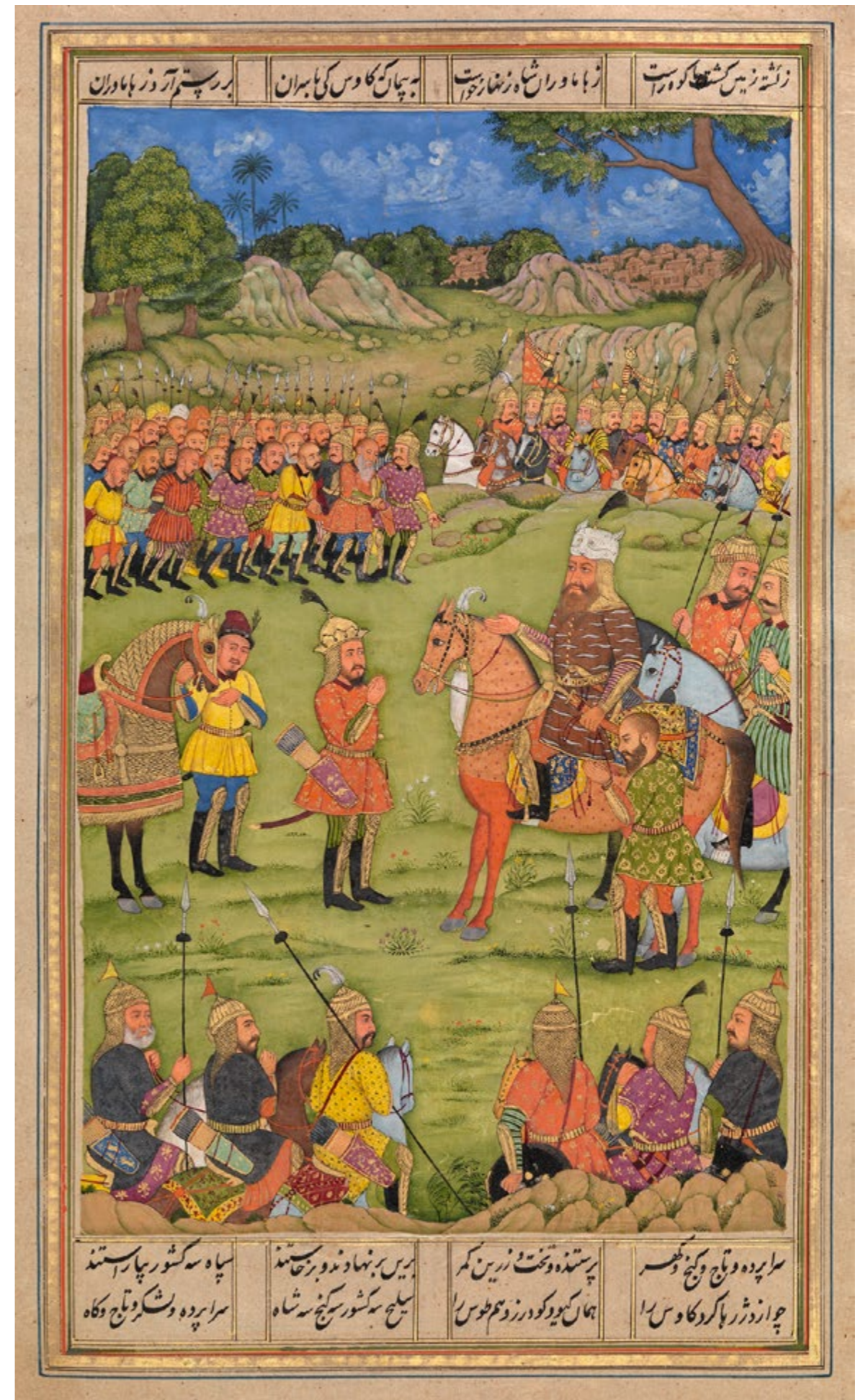
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Provenance:

Private Collection, UK



Buzurjmihr Demonstrates His Wisdom

A folio from a Shahnameh of Ferdowsi

Mughal India, circa 1775 - 1800

Opaque watercolour and gold on paper

Folio: 39 x 27 cm

Miniature: 17 x 14.5 cm

An opulent pavilion exterior provides the setting for a discussion between Anushiravan (Khosrou I), one of the great Sassanian Kings, his wazir Buzurjmihr and a wise sage. Standing beside Anushiravan an attendant waves a peacock feather fan as the King presides over the discussion. This story is one of seven from the Shahname, describing a debate between Buzurjmihr, Anushiravan, and the wisemen of the court. During these debates Buzurjmihr is questioned by all the wise men, answering them before the King.

Seated on a resplendent throne, Anushiravan wears a green robe and an exquisite gold overcoat with a fur lined collar, embroidered with delicate red and purple flowers. Regally attired, his bejeweled crown is set against a green nimbus emitting golden rays. Buzurjmihr, also dressed in a green *jama* and gold overcoat embellished with floral design, kneels dutifully beside the throne with his hands folded. Beside the carpet, the sage rests his hands upon his staff contemplatively.

Responding to the sage's questions about the relationship between fate and destiny, Buzurjmihr explains that they are in the hands of the wise creator, and therefore one must conduct life with forgiveness and acceptance. His gaze, directed at Anushiravan, is indicative of his reverence for a King whose rule extolls justice and firm government. Reciprocally, Anushiravan gestures towards Buzurjmihr, affirming that he is a valued advisor. Tales such as this led to Buzurjmihr being regarded as an exemplar for Islamic *wazirs*.

This harmonious composition is beset with lavish detail. The white marble pavilion is embellished with intricate *pietra dura* inlaid floral motifs, many appearing within delicate





golden niches. The roof is covered in geometric green tiles, decorated with red flowers. Beneath a canopy and enclosed by golden *jalis*, Buzurjmihir kneels on a white carpet whose dazzling elements include elegant cartouches, and sinuous floral motifs. In the background, soft pink and red blossoms meander through a row of trees and birds soar across the gold streaked horizon of the brilliant blue sky.

During the eighteenth century as the Mughal Empire diminished, major provincial capitals flourished in Bengal, Lucknow and the Deccan. The lure of wealthy patrons attracted many artists to these new cultural centers. However following Shah Alam II's reinstatement in 1772, Delhi witnessed a period of revival in late Mughal painting. Illustrations to literary works such as the *Shahnameh*, written by the poet Ferdowsi circa 1010 AD, became increasingly popular.

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Provenance:

Private Collection, UK

A View of Shalimar Bagh

Leaf from an album made for Antoine Polier,
Lucknow, India. Circa 1780.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper.
45.5 x 62cm

Shalimar Bagh is a classical Mughal garden in Srinagar, Kashmir. It is connected via a channel to Dal Lake on the northeast bank. The gardens were originally built in 1619 by Emperor Jahangir (r.1605-27) for his wife Nur Jahan, and they made their summer residence there for at least thirteen years. Under Shah Jahan (r.1628-58) the gardens were extended, and were frequented by Sikh and Pathan governors.

The ideal Mughal garden is a reflection of paradise and of eternal spring, a product of an 'ordered aesthetic'. The memoirs of Jehangir suggest that apart from flowering trees, fruit trees such as cherry and grape vines were favored.

Patronage for painting in Lucknow was spurred by European patrons and collectors in the mid 18th century. Antoine Polier, of Swiss origin, was one such patron. His keen interest and engagement with India, its music and dance, is evident from two paintings of him in Mughal costume watching a traditional dance. Polier worked for Warren Hasting, The Governor general of Bengal in Calcutta, and subsequently for Shuja – Ud-Dowlah, the Nawab of Awadh. He collected fine paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries and commissioned new work. His training as an engineer is likely to have had a bearing on his taste. A strong sense of perspective and architectural accuracy is visible in the paintings made for him.

His retained artist, Mihr Chand, was responsible for the production of the albums, including their layouts and decoration. It is possible that the artist of this painting never actually visited Kashmir in person, as the distant hills in the background resemble more closely the rolling hills of Awadh, where the painting was no doubt executed, rather than the vast Pir Panjal mountain range, the largest range of the lower Himalayas, which are the real backdrop to Dal Lake and the Shalimar Gardens.

Polier commissioned paintings actively and gave some as gifts. A set of Images in the Museum fur Islamische Kunst, Berlin (The Berlin Album I5005) is very closely related. Other pages from the Polier albums are found in the Asian art Museum San Francisco.

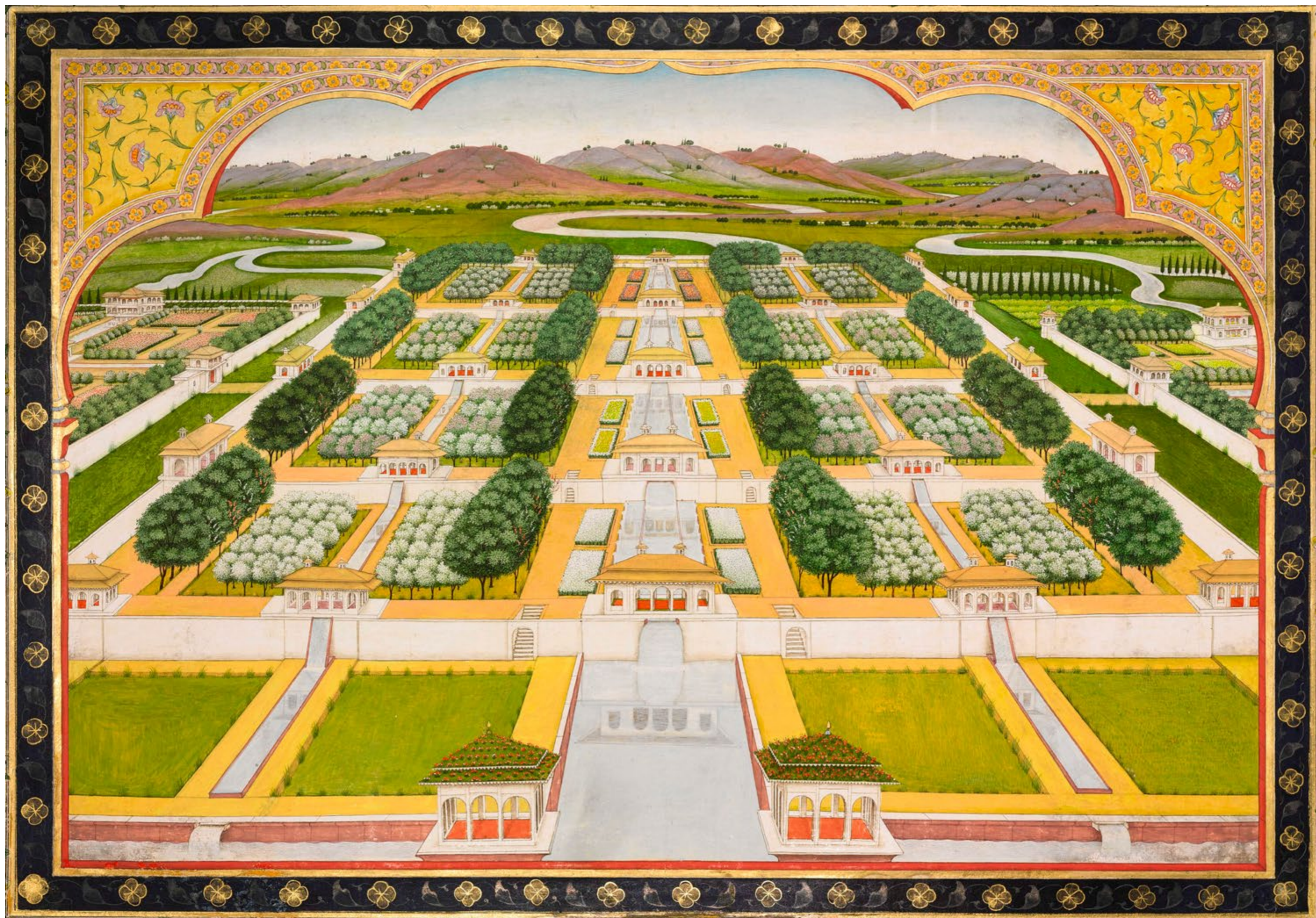
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Antoine Louis Polier. India. Circa 1780.





Ghulam Husayn Khan, an Afghan, with Munni Banu and her child.

By a master artist working
for William Fraser.
From the Fraser Album.
Delhi, India Circa 1820
31x41.8cm



The gifted East India company officer William Fraser was based around Delhi from 1806, when he employed a painter to compile an exceptional visual and ethnographic record of the people and places. He worked as a revenue officer in the rural territories in the environs of the capital.

The group of superb images known as the Fraser album, include some of the technically finest company paintings. The master artist recruited by Fraser became a close member of his entourage and travelled with him understanding his taste and requirement. He developed an individual style using transparent watercolour, elongated figures, stippling emphasizing the brushstrokes, and miniaturist attention to detail.

William Fraser is known to have read and spoken Hindustani and Persian, besides having more than one Indian wife. His diaries vividly inform us about his interactions with people and offer a glimpse of the extent lives of the Indian and British were intertwined. A number of individuals portrayed in the album are people who worked for William, including 'Ummee Chand' his faithful servant who saved his life – dressed in the uniform of Skinner's horse in a work now in the Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan collection.

The sensitive portrait group of the Afghan family, he holds a bow and is dressed primarily in white. The painter's skill at communicating the volume and detail of costume is striking. The woman and child form a vertical counterpoint in a bold compositional form as the picture has a plain background. The detailing of her indigo sari is exquisitely painted with white highlights that delight the eye. There are highlights of gold on the ornaments worn by the sitters that add a layer of complexity to the restrained palette. Lines of text in nasta-liq identify the sitters.

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غلام حسین خان قوم افغان خوش آئین که زین باغستان
قصور در قلعه ساجد خان

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم
بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم



Shiva and his Family are Worshipped by a Devotee

Punjab Hills, circa 1840
Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
24 x 18 cm

Shiva and Parvati sit with their sons Ganesh and Kartikeya on a riverbank. They are joined by their respective mounts: Shiva's bull Nandi, Parvati's tiger, Ganesh's rat and Kartikeya's peacock. A devotee stands beside them, his hands clasped in prayer. Inscriptions on the reverse of the painting provide the name and profession of 'Rai Lal Chand Bhadur, Honorary Magistrate and Sarpanch of Amritsar'. An elected head of local government, Rai Lal Chand is likely to be the devotee depicted in this painting and also the patron of it.

The mood is tranquil. Shiva's locks are stylistically matted like a turban (*jatabhara*) and enclosed by a crescent moon. His nimbus (*prabhamandala*) radiates in gold and a serpent curls around his neck. Parvati is dressed in typical Pahari costume consisting of an orange *odhani* and a dark blue *lehanga*. She wears numerous ornaments, including a delicate ring in her nose. In her right hand she holds forth a gold pot to Shiva, while in her left is a garland of skulls. Ganesh kneels besides Shiva's thigh holding a broken tusk. A crown adorns his head and his rich orange body is embellished with fine jewellery. Kartikeya observes his mother's offering as he holds a *vajra* in his hands. His peacock overlooks the scene while Nandi lies content with a fine gold saddlecloth and a row of bells descending from his neck.

Painted in a variation of the Kangra style, the scene is imbued with devotion to Shiva. The figures have been sensitively portrayed, their supple bodies and sweet expressions bearing the idealised naturalism typical of paintings from the region. The artist uses subtle shading on Shiva's face, his expression one of serene pre-eminence. In contrast to Shiva's finery, the devotee appears in plain clothes and bare feet. His piety is displayed as he draws in his chin and gently lifts his eyes to meet those of his Lord.

Shiva's family was a popular theme in paintings from the Punjab Hills. They draw upon dualistic philosophical systems of Shiva worship; while Shiva and Parvati are essential to each other they also separate. For devotion and worship to exist duality between deity and devotee must be maintained. The dominant *rasa* is *bhakti* (devotion) and Parvati is the ultimate *bhakta* of Shiva.



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First Published on the occassion of the exhibition:

THE FLOWER GARDEN: INDIAN PAINTING 1600 - 1850

Asia Week New York

13 - 21 March, 2015

Published by Prahlad Bubbar Ltd. London

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Graphic Design by Jakob Rowlinson

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