

# INDIAN PAINTING

*Intimacy and Formality*

John Seyller

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The title of this exhibition, two years in the making, reflects some of the key themes that are expressed in this group of Indian painting. Moments of intimacy are revealed in the portrait of the Mughal emperor Akbar tenderly cradling his favourite grandson (cat. 2) or the quiet, religious gathering of disciples around their master, the famous Sufi saint Miyan Mir. The setting is a rare depiction of a mid 17th century Mughal interior (cat. 3). Studies of closeness are depicted in the three Gita Govinda drawings (cats 24–26).

Nothing could be grander than the contemporary portrait of a Safavid officer, Mahdi-Quli Khan, from the Late Shahjahan Album. The painting is unusual because Shah Jahan has inscribed both the subject and the artist (cat. 4). The impressive, large processional scene of Raja Som Bhupal II of Gadwal on his piebald horse by a Hyderabadi artist conveys an importance and grandeur that this provincial raja wished he possessed (cat. 8).

We would like to thank John Seyller for his in-depth and enthusiastic scholarship. Some inscriptions have been read by Will Kwiatowski and Misha Anikst has designed this catalogue. We are also grateful to the late J.P.Losty, Andrew Topsfield, Helen Loveday, Narmada Prasad Upadhyaya, Adrian Plau, Daisy Ashton from the National Army Museum, Richard Valentia, Will Fulton and, as always Christine Ramphal and Danielle Beilby. I want to dedicate this publication to the memory of Konrad Seitz.

Francesca Galloway

*Indian Painting: Intimacy and Formality*

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23 E 73rd Street, 7th Floor, Penthouse  
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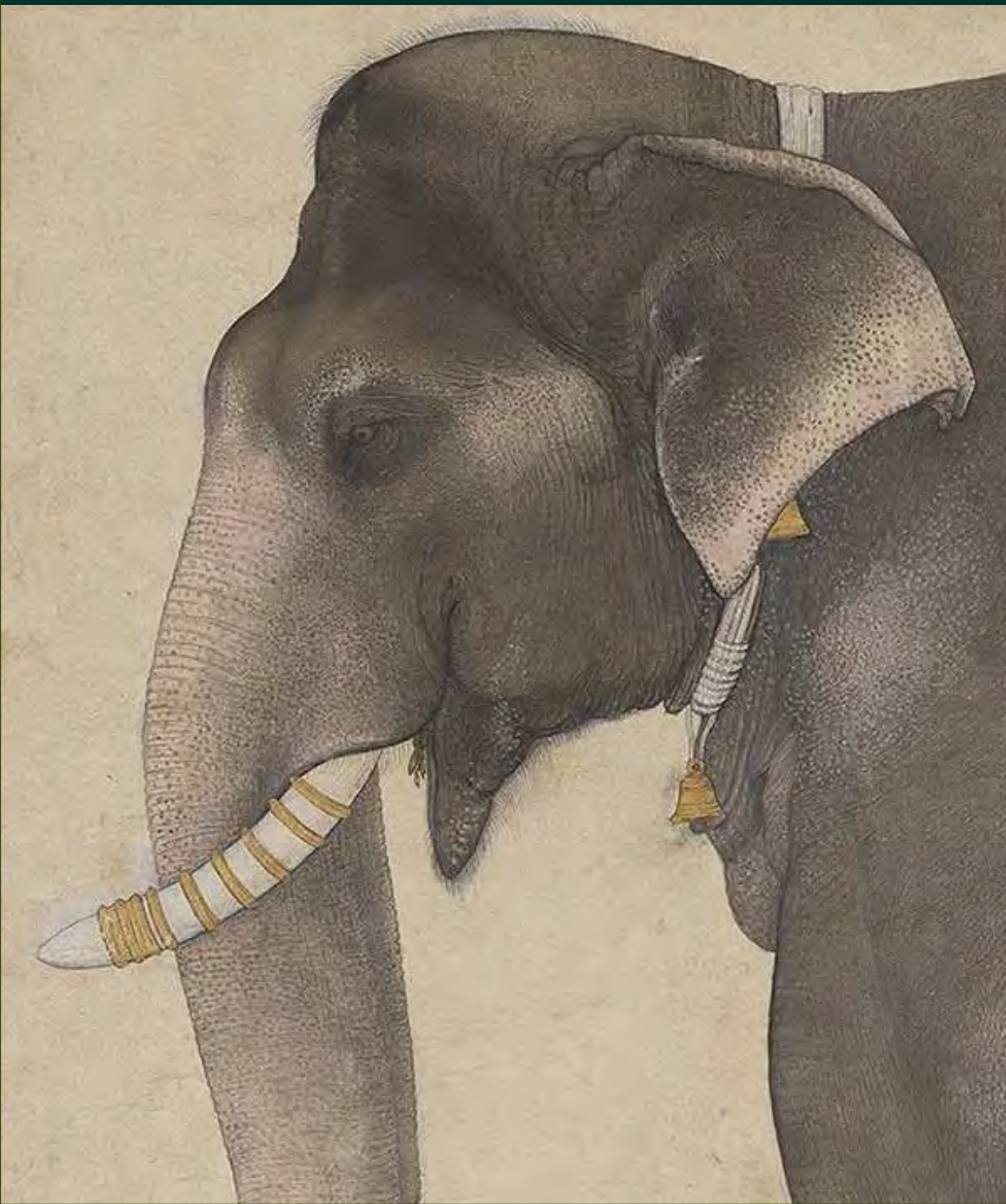
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1 page 6



2 page 9



6 page 21

4 page 13



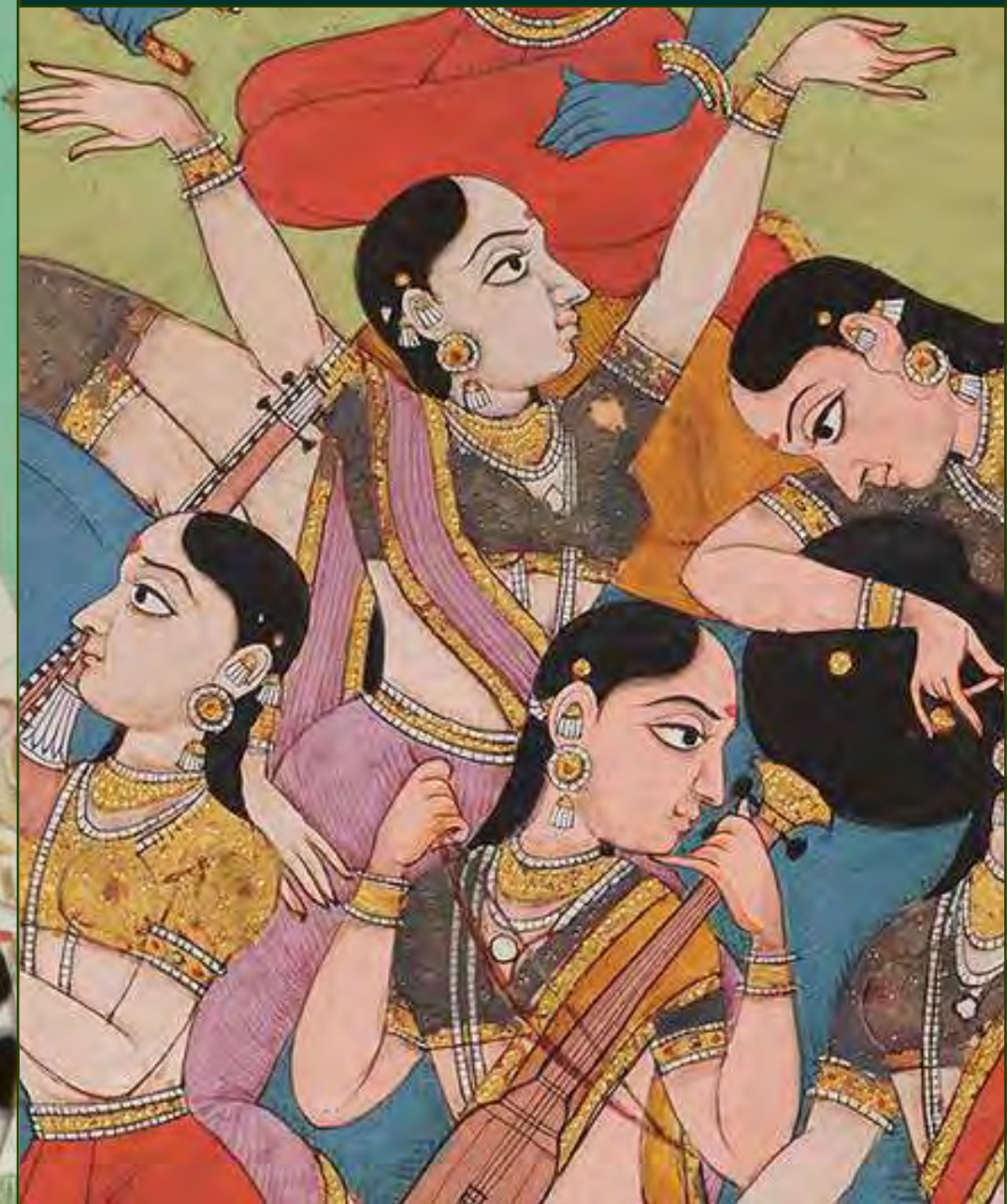
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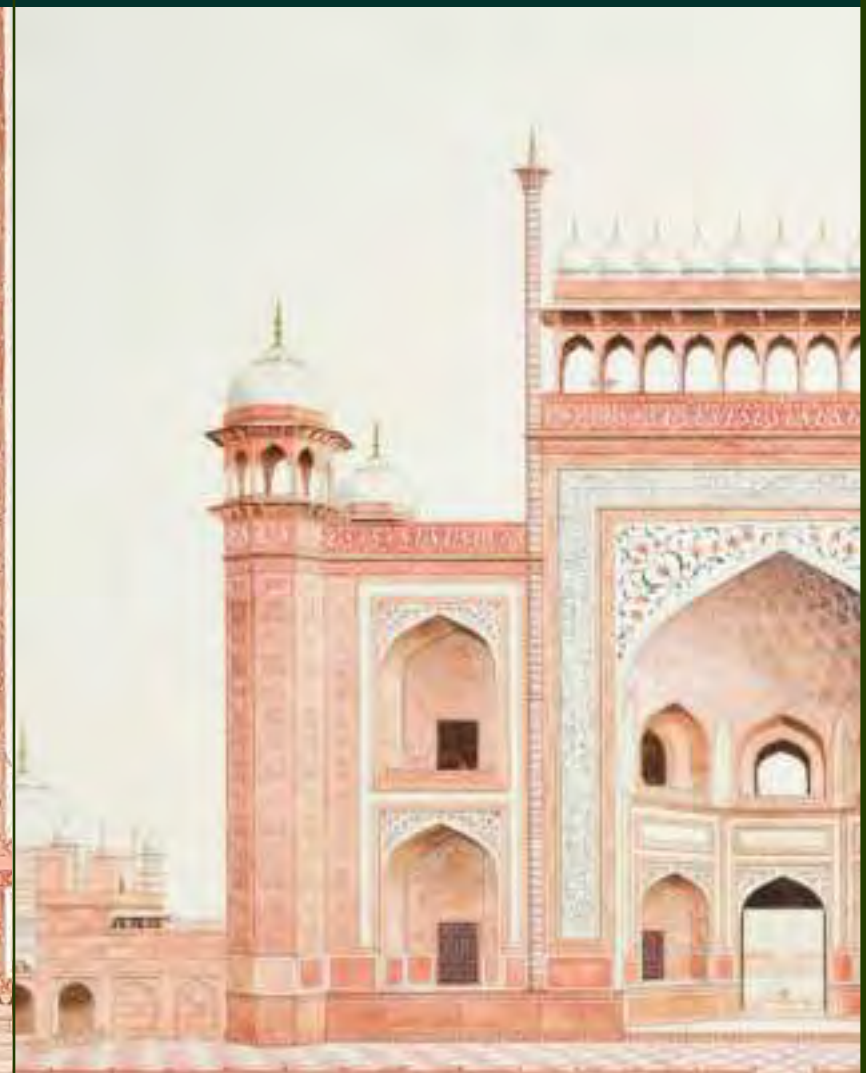
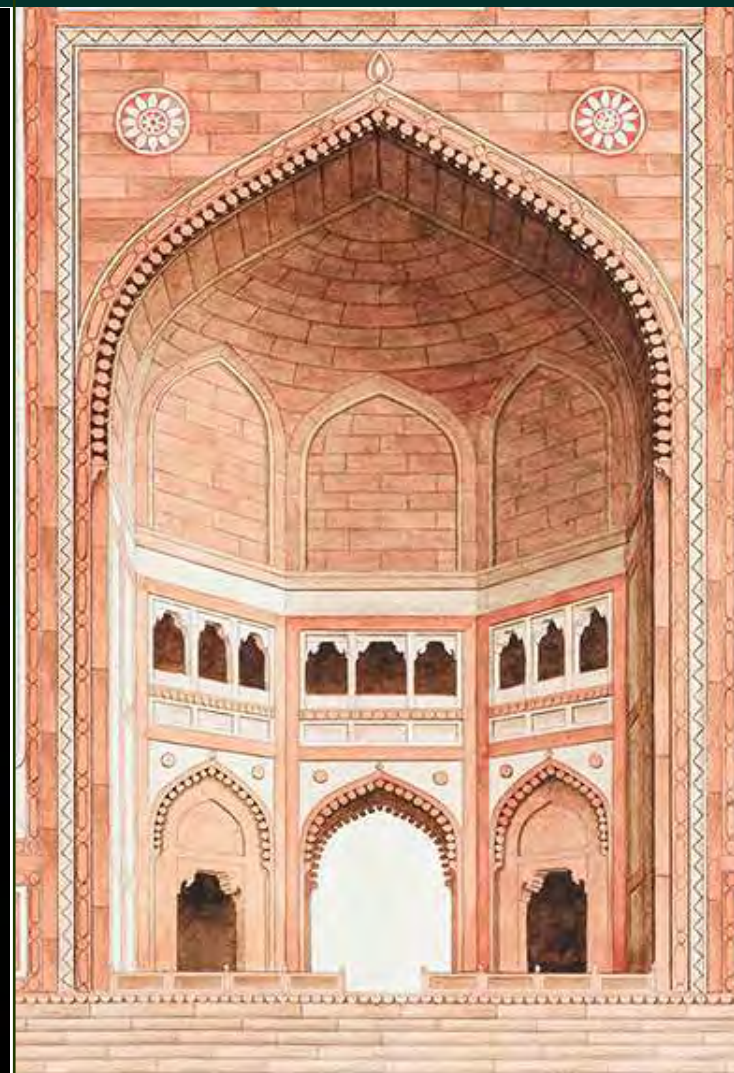


7 page 24

5 page 19













## Elephant

Attributed to Dawlat

Mughal, c. 1635

Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid down on an album leaf

Folio 31.5 × 47 cm; painting 25.5 × 38 cm

### Provenance

Private collection, France (acquired 20th March 1961)

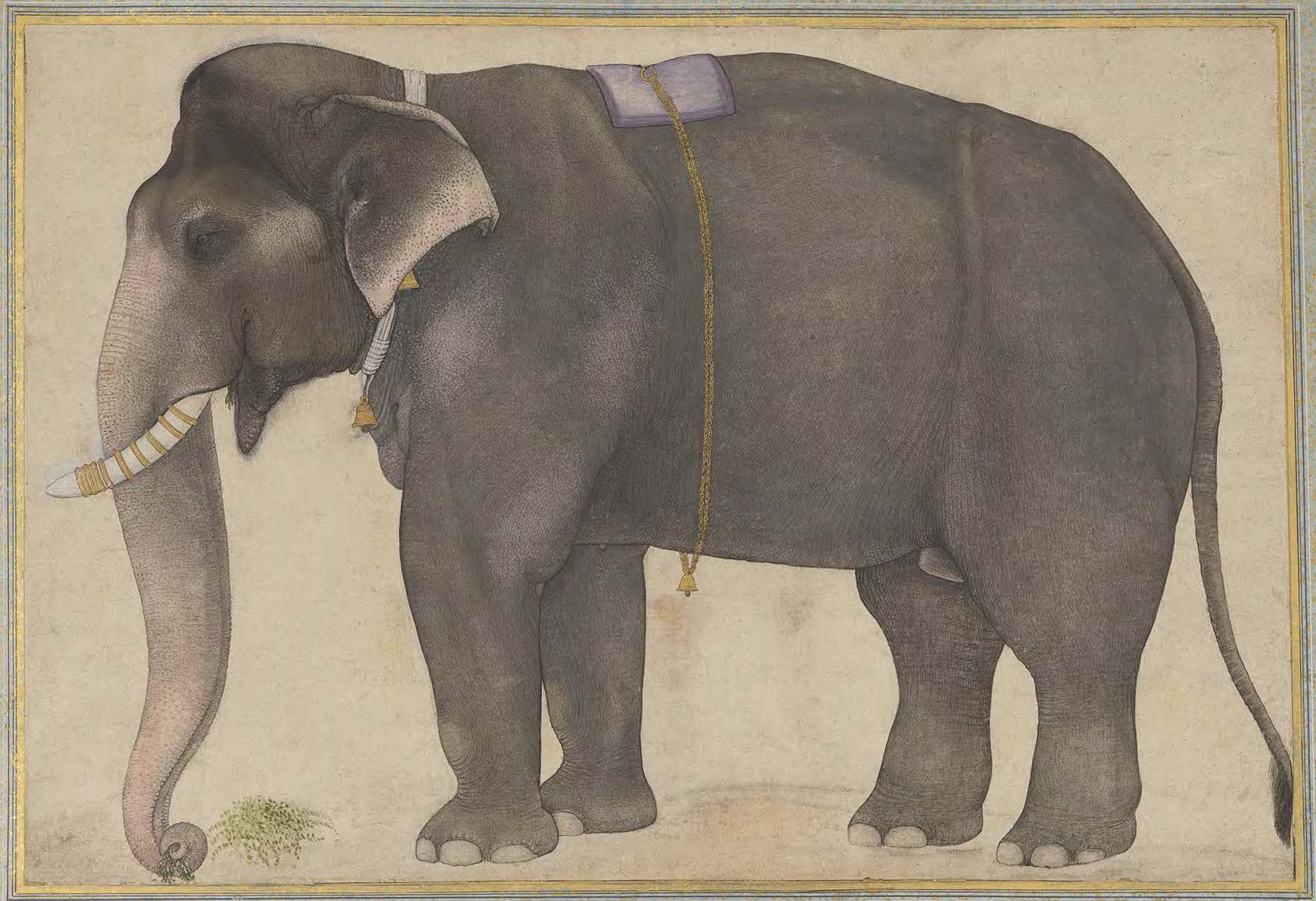
Indian artists are unrivalled in the world for their insightful and empathetic images of elephants, creatures traditionally prized as both potent weapons of war and regal symbols. Whilst Mughal artists were occasionally asked to depict elephants in the wild, more often they painted domesticated creatures as ancillary elements in grand imperial activities, typically bearing royalty in howdahs in panoramic scenes of battle, procession, or the hunt. Another type of image focused less on the elephant's movement and behaviour than on its physical attributes, showcasing an individual creature as the mount for a particular prince or, in partial views, as a presentation gift in the foreground of a ceremonial *darbar* scene. Such images are nothing less than true elephant portraits, in which the artist painstakingly describes such physical features as the shape and condition of the elephant's ear, the colouration of his head and trunk, and the length of his tusks. In some cases, these nuanced physical distinctions are accompanied by an inscription that records on the painting itself both the name of the particular beast and its contemporary valuation, which routinely reached the astronomical sum of 100,000 rupees.<sup>1</sup> Creatures of such innate impressiveness and contemporary renown were habitually made resplendent by the addition of lavish regalia; standard among them were an embroidered velvet saddle cloth (*jhul*), gilt chains around the neck festooned with jangling bells (*chaurasi*), and a yak tail tassel hung from the top of the ear (*jhumar*).

The artist who created this exquisite likeness of a massive bull elephant forgoes the pretense of a courtly rider and the splendor of luxurious trappings. Instead, he achieves a different sort of grandeur by offering a monumental portrait of the unnamed elephant in a decidedly unostentatious state: standing alone, immobile and untethered, placidly munching on a small pile of grasses, some of which remain in his mouth still unchewed. The regalia are strikingly minimal, consisting of only the ubiquitous golden *kalap* (tusk protector) and *bangri* (metal rings) on the untrimmed tusk, the eight-finger-wide twisted guide rope (*kilawa*) around the neck hung with two jangling bells, and the complementary chain and larger bell (*pitakchh*) girding his midsection. The artist carefully renders with muted colouring and easily overlooked three-dimensionality the small pad placed on the elephant's back to protect against chafing by that chain, a mundane feature included in only one comparable image, an unfinished drawing of Dara Shikoh's elephant Madhgar by Hashim.<sup>2</sup>

Although several highly accomplished drawings of Mughal elephants of this period have survived, they are often unfinished and somewhat damaged, with only the elephant's head and trunk brought nearly to completion.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, this superb work, which is in impeccable condition, is remarkably detailed in every passage, a quality truly appreciated only under sustained first-hand examination of the painting or through by prolonged scrutiny of high-resolution photographs. The artist's dispassionate approach is apparent throughout the work, beginning with a careful









recording of the irregular bumps of the elephant's spine in lieu of the much-simplified sweeping curve seen in other elephant portraits. It continues in the sophisticated definition of the structure of the large and rounded socket surrounding the small golden eye and includes even such a minuscule detail as eyelashes whilst not lapsing into anthropomorphised embellishments. Areas around the eye, down the upper portion of the trunk, and along the lower edge of the ear are wonderfully variegated as the artist exploits the interplay of underlying pink skin with dense speckles of brown pigmentation. He demonstrates keen sensitivity to the prominence and directional quality of the scraggly hair sprouting from the top of the head, along the lower lip, and within the ear. He is equally attuned to the grain of the one visible tusk, which is indicated by the faintly drawn lines running the tusk's length and then later deftly tempered by a thin layer of white paint. Likewise, he assiduously describes the muscle running vertically above the rear leg, a feature omitted in other elephant portraits. Most amazingly, the artist works to create a tight web of textures by applying marks of varying directions and darkness across the leathery skin of the entire body, including the tail, neither defaulting to a predictable system of elementary crosshatching nor leaving any area of skin altogether unarticulated. An additional layer of brown paint applied sporadically makes for a still more complex surface. Discreet suggestions of a low groundline near the elephant's feet establish a minimal and unobtrusive environment.

Which artist made this magnificent elephant portrait? Two elephant drawings of similar quality are ascribed or attributed to Hashim, but those examples exhibit a much sharper linear definition and less all-over texturing than this painting.<sup>4</sup> The same can be said of a slightly earlier portrait of an elephant named Pawan Gaj ascribed to Nanha,<sup>5</sup> as well as the excellent painting of Dara Shikoh's pink elephant firmly attributed to Bichitr.<sup>6</sup> Finally, a painting of the African elephant Dariya attributed to Govardhan has pronounced but soft contours and preternaturally smooth surfaces that differ from the corresponding features here.<sup>7</sup> In short, although several of the most accomplished Mughal painters active during the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan ventured independent elephant portraits, none of those ascribed or attributed examples provide a close stylistic match to this one.

An invaluable source for comparable depictions of elephants is the Royal Library *Padshahnama*, whose forty-four illustrations are practically an encyclopedia of the work of Shahjahan-period Mughal artists. Amongst the dozen or so paintings that feature elephants in one role or another, one particular illustration exhibits an exceptional kinship in the representation of elephants: *Shahjahan hunting lions at Burhanpur*, a painting of c. 1635 attributed to Dawlat.<sup>8</sup> Close comparison of the rendering of the area around the elephant's eye, as well as in the subtly muted colouring of his trunk, ear, and forelegs, points strongly to Dawlat, a master active from c. 1595 to 1635 and the probable supervisor of the major phase of production of the Jahangir Album.<sup>9</sup> Even from the outset of his career, Dawlat habitually strives to achieve an acute if understated sense of volume in his figures and forms, often manipulating the degree of colour saturation within a given body or object to enhance the impression of volume. This effect, seen here in the protective pad on the elephant's back, is evident in a slightly exaggerated form in his 1596–97 Beatty *Akbarnama* illustrations, but in a fully mature expression in his famous marginal portraits of his fellow painters in the Jahangir Album, as well as in *A dervish and a musician* of c. 1610.<sup>10</sup>

Inscription on back of the original frame detailing the provenance is available on request.

1. *Dara Shikoh Mounted on the Elephant Mahabir Dev*, Victoria and Albert Museum IM.23–1928, published in Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2002), pl. 128.
2. The Fitzwilliam Museum PD. 84–1948.
3. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 17.2654.
4. The Fitzwilliam Museum PD. 84–1948, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2010.255.
5. Location unknown, published in A. Das, 'The Elephant in Indian Painting', fig. 12, p. 48 in S.P. Verma, ed., *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1999), pp. 36–54.
6. Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Grand Mogul* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1978), no. 33.
7. Private collection, published in Daniel J. Ehnobom, *Indian Miniatures: The Ehrenfeld Collection* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), no. 22.
8. *Padshahnama*, f. 22ob, published in Milo Cleveland Beach, Ebba Koch, and Wheeler Thackston, *King of the World: The Padshahnama, an Imperial Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (London: Azimuth Editions Limited in association with the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1997), pl. 46.
9. The most comprehensive account of this artist's career is Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, and B.N. Goswamy, eds., *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100–1900*, 2 vols. (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2011), vol. 1, pp. 305–320.
10. Beach in Beach, Koch, and Thackston 1997, figs. 3, 4a–b, 7, and 10.





### Akbar Holding an Infant

Attributed to Kesava Das  
Mughal, c. 1593  
Opaque pigments and gold on paper  
Folio 11.3 × 7.3 cm

#### Provenance:

Anthony Powell (1935–2021), the award-winning English costume designer for film and stage.  
Maggs Bros., *Oriental Miniatures & Illumination, Bulletin* no. 26 (September 1976), no.29; Sotheby's, London, 12 April 1976, lot 78

In an endearing and exceedingly rare depiction of patriarchal intimacy in Mughal painting, Emperor Akbar is portrayed tenderly cradling an infant in the crook of his arm. Shown standing in profile view with a characteristically wheat-coloured complexion, he appears as a mature adult – perhaps about fifty years old – whilst the infant, one of the youngest royal children depicted in Mughal painting, seems no more than eighteen months old.<sup>1</sup> The difference in their ages and the advanced naturalism of the painting style make it obvious that infant is someone other than Salim, Akbar's eldest son, who was born in 1569, when Akbar was only twenty-seven. Instead, the infant boy must represent a grandson, presumably the emperor's favourite, Khurram (b. 5 January 1592), thus logically dating the scene to about 1593.

The artist imparts a fine sense of volume to the emperor's plain white, bell-shaped *jama* with long, subtle folds, and complements that quality with a shape-emphasising outline that thickens and darkens as it runs from waist to hem. The *jama* is tied with delicate lappets that flutter almost imperceptibly near the armpit, where musk marks are daubed on as dense, dark dots. The short *patka* that cinches the *jama* at the waist ends only slightly below it, and is made from tie-dyed fabric (*bandhani*), a sartorial detail that appears in several other portraits of the emperor. Akbar's full golden *paijama* tapers dramatically to the ankle, even covering the heels of his shoes. The turban, a restrained brown in colour, is decorated with a modest single strand of pearls.

For his part, the infant prince wears standard infant apparel – a close-fitting bonnet with long side flaps and a golden tunic – and grabs playfully at the emperor's simple necklace, an action now partially obscured by surface damage. The artist introduces another light-hearted note in the prince's boyish companion, who is shown minding the prince's leashed pet, a belled small Indian civet (*Viverricula indica*). The older boy, too wears a simple white robe (with a dark outline added later), but pairs it with divertingly moppish red headgear. The painting's background was probably plain green originally, but a suggestion of a darker mound was added a bit later along with a smattering of grasses and three rudimentary flowering plants.

The modelling of the emperor's face, neck, and right hand and the technique of rendering musk marks support an attribution to Kesava Das (active c. 1565–96), a pioneering Akbar-period master captivated by effects of light and shadow in European art.<sup>2</sup> In this case, that interest is manifested most clearly in the dramatically modelled folds in his golden *paijama*. The c. 1586–87 Victoria and Albert Museum Akbarnama provides numerous comparative examples of Kesava's portraits of Akbar, almost always in collaborative illustrations in which he is named as the designer, but once in which he is recorded as being charged with special portraits.<sup>3</sup>



1. For a comparable image of Akbar standing beside a child (a posthumous portrait of Prince Danyal), see one of four conjoined portraits on a folio from the Jahangir Album in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MS. 156.2000), which is published in John Seyller, in Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, eds., *God is Beautiful and Loves Beauty: The Object in Islamic Art and Culture* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2013), fig. 276, p. 313. For a similar scene of paternal affection, see Emperor Shahjahan and an Infant (Victoria and Albert Museum IS.90–1965). Another painting (Maggs Bulletin no. 12, September 1967, lot 14) shows an infant seated on the emperor's lap, whilst one in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (55.121.10.36) depicts Emperor Shahjahan seated on a throne with a five-year-old Prince Dara Shikoh. An extraordinary European-inspired portrait of an eighteen-month-old Shah Shuja' seated alone with some fruit is ascribed to Abu'l Hasan and dated to c. 1617–18. It was offered at auction at Sotheby's, London, 25 October 2023, lot 22, and is now in a private collection.
2. For this artist, whose name is also transliterated as Keshav or Kesu, see Amina Okada, 'Keshav Das', in Beach, Fischer, and Goswamy, eds., *Masters of Indian Painting*, vol. 1, pp. 153–166. See especially figs. 11 and 13 for representative examples of the artist's system of modelling.
3. For example, Victoria and Albert Museum IS.2:16–1896, IS.2:84–1896, IS.2:85–1896, IS.2:110–1896, and IS.2:113–1896. In such manuscripts, it was quite common for the designer to supply one or two important figures as well, so it is reasonable to assume that Kesava painted the emperor in all these works. He is often named as Kesava Kalan (the elder).



### Miyan Mir in Discussion with Sages and Followers

Folio from the Ardeshir Album

Ascribed *raqam-i La'lchand* ('work of La'lchand')

Mughal, c. 1650

Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid down on an 18 century album leaf

Folio 56 × 35.1 cm; painting 14.1 × 10.2 cm

Reverse: Calligraphy signed Ghulam Sudh Rai, 20.3 × 10.8 cm

#### Provenance:

Sotheby's, London, 15 October 2003, lot 36

Sotheby's, London, 26 March 1973, lot 11 (Ardeshir collection)

Mughal painters regularly sought to convey the presence of spiritual wisdom, usually embodying it in the form of several Muslim holy men engaged in discourse. This type of gathering gained popularity in art during the reign of Shahjahan (1627–58), in no small part due to the spiritual inclination of the emperor's heir-apparent, his eldest son, Dara Shikoh (1615–59). The prince's proclivity for spiritual reflection became so serious in the mid 1630s that he undertook training that culminated in his formal ordination in an order of Sufis under the guidance of Miyan Mir Badakshi (1531–11 August 1635) and his main disciple, Mulla Shah (d. 1660). Indeed, Dara is depicted several times in quiet instruction with these two revered figures.

Like most examples of this genre, this composition shows six sages seated in a semi-circle, the most prominent of the figures being positioned closest to the centre. This scene is atypical, however, because it replaces the customary outdoor setting with the dim interior of a wooden pavilion, whose beam-and-plank ceiling, ornamental brackets, structural details, and discreetly patterned floor coverings are meticulously described. Immediately beyond its four slender colonettes and rolled-up red blinds is a garden that features a small fountain, a solid balustrade, some cypresses and ornamental plants, a high grey wall, and a slice of green sky. Two figures are identifiable by name. The first is Miyan Mir, the compact and rounded figure seated characteristically with his legs held close to his chest by means of a *yogapatta* (meditation strap), and his right hand resting on his left shoulder – part of a recurring pose said to convey the acute arthritis that plagued him in old age.<sup>1</sup> Directly opposite him is not his foremost disciple, Mulla Shah, as is commonly seen, but a sage with an elongated face, a prominent hooked nose, and a full, snowy white beard that is broad and rounded at the bottom. This distinctive figure, who appears in at least three other scenes of a group of sages in discussion,<sup>2</sup> is identified here as Shaykh Husayn Ajmeri. Surprisingly, this sage, who is of Chishti lineage, is recorded as dying in 1619–20, so this painting should not be understood as documenting an actual gathering. Rather, what inspired the persistent representation of Shaykh Husayn Ajmeri<sup>3</sup> in several paintings made a decades after his death must be either the strength of his legacy or the construction of his tomb in 1637.

Three of the other four figures in the group also appear in other contemporary scenes of intimate religious gatherings. The white-bearded figure on the left plying a peacock-feather *morchal* (flywhisk) in veneration is featured prominently in *Assembly of Poets and Sufis* attributed to Bichitr, and the aforementioned scene of *Dara Shikoh with Sages* at Harvard.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the black-bearded holy man beside him with both *tasbeih* (prayer beads) and book in hand turns up on the left side of the aforementioned *Assembly of Poets and Sufis*, and on the centre left of the right half of a double-page





composition of *Shahjahan's Celebrations upon the Prophet's Birthday*. And the long-bearded figure on the right wearing a black-and-white striped garment and holding a sword hilt and shield is depicted with similar dress and attributes in the left half of the same comprehensive composition. Only the young and beardless figure in the lower right has no known counterpart in other Mughal scenes of sages. One might expect a royal figure, perhaps even Dara Shikoh himself, but this assumption is belied by his clean-shaven face, clerical robe and turban, and prayer beads. In all likelihood, he represents a novice amongst more venerable disciples and loyal followers. Thus, in the end, whilst the sages assembled in this slightly anachronistic group are certainly more than simple figure types, their recognisability as familiar individuals was probably meant to assert the eminence of the spiritual mentors in Dara's circle.

Ascribed on the balustrade wall is the name of La'lchand, a well-documented Mughal painter active about 1620–1650. His ascribed work consists primarily of portraits of individual members of the royalty and nobility, including a portrait drawing of a standing Dara Shikoh.<sup>5</sup> One painting attributed to him even takes up the same kind of subject seen here by depicting Dara Shikoh with Miyan Mir, Mulla Shah, and seven other holy men.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have remarked on both La'lchand's penchant for precisely drawn forms and his tendency to model his own personal style on those of several peers in the imperial atelier, notably Abu'l Hasan, Bichitr, and Payag.<sup>7</sup> His figures habitually possess a distinctive columnar quality and smooth surface. In this work, as in several others late in his career, La'lchand seems to have followed the lead of Payag, who experimented with dramatic chiaroscuro effects and bolder, looser brushwork for much of his career. Here, La'lchand's indebtedness to that style is expressed in the figures' thickly painted robes and hands, as well as the deliberately uneven colouring of various cushions. In other paintings, namely, his sole illustration to the c. 1644 *Gulistan* of Sa'di,<sup>8</sup> and another scene of a shaykh and others listening to music at night, La'lchand freely exploits deep shadows and explores their muting effect on coloured forms.<sup>9</sup>

On the reverse of the folio is a panel of calligraphy written diagonally and surrounded by cloud bands on a solid gold field. Below the quatrain proper is the signature of the calligrapher, Ghulam Sudh Rai.<sup>10</sup> This folio once belonged the so-called Ardeshir Album, which was assembled during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719–48) by the Maratha *Peshwa*, Nana Phadnavis, and is now widely dispersed. Its wide 18th century borders are decorated in a manner akin to that of the Royal Library *Padshahnama*, with two different formal floral motifs in gold set into medallions formed by a continuous frame. The album takes its name from A.C. Ardeshir, who lived in Bombay and Pune and purportedly acquired the paintings in the 1920s from a neighbour in financial straits. This folio came on the market in 1973 as one of thirty-eight folios from that album, which includes a close if slightly simplified copy of this painting as well as many other scenes of holy men and royalty.<sup>11</sup>

1. Murad Mumtaz, *Faces of God: Images of Devotion in Indo-Muslim Painting, 1500–1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), p. 285.

2. *Prince Muradbakhsh and a Mulla with Companions*, ascribed to Govardhan, c. 1638–40, private collection; *Dara Shikoh with Sages*, c. 1630, Harvard Art Museums 1968.47, published in Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Grand Mogul* (Williamstown, MA, 1978), cat.63; and *Shahjahan's Celebrations upon the Prophet's Birthday*, c. 1635, National Museum of Asian Art F1942.18,





published in Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image*, 2nd revised edition (Washington, DC, 2012), cat.22.

3. Mumtaz 2023, fig. 135 and p. 285 identifies him as Shaykh Husayn Ajmeri on the basis of the caption written on the book he holds in a painting of 1627–28 in the Millionenzimmer, Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna.

4. San Diego Museum of Art 1990.353, published in B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, *Domains of Wonder: Selected Masterworks of Indian Painting* (San Diego, CA: San Diego Museum of Art, 2005), cat.58.

5. Christie's 19 June 2019, lot 185.

6. National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution S1986.432, published in Beach 2012, cat.36.

7. Beach 2012, pp. 231–232; and Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings in the Chester Beatty Library*, 2 vols. (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), vol. 2: 1109.

8. National Museum of Asian Art F1998.5, published in Beach 2012, cat.16E.

9. Bodleian Library MS. Douce Or.a.1, f. 40a. published in Andrew Topsfield, *Paintings from Mughal India* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2008), cat.43.

10. According to Ghulam Muhammad Dihlavi, Sudh Rai was a member of the Kayath caste from Ilahabad (Allahabad) whose ancestors had been in imperial service. Ghulam Muhammad praises Sudh Rai as second to none in nasta'liq and as having perfected the style of Muhammad Musa (Mawlana Ghulam Muhammad Dihlavi, ed. M. Hidayet Husain, *The Tahdkirah-i Khushnavisan of Mawlana Ghulam Muhammad Dihlavi* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1910), p. 121. An album page signed by Sudh Rai and dated 1179/1765–6 is in album of painting and calligraphy in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, (Maulavi Abdul Muqtadir Khan Bahadur, *Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian Manuscripts in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore*, vol. XI (Persian Mss) (Calcutta: Government of Bihar and Orissa, 1927), p. 92.

11. Sotheby's, London, 28 March 1973, lots 1–38. The copy, which includes Mulla Shah amongst its seven figures and bears an apparently spurious ascription to La'lchand, is lot 10 of that sale, and lot 37 of a later Sotheby's auction on 15 October 2003. Many paintings in the album have dubious signatures and ascriptions.





**A Contemporary Portrait of Mahdi-Quli Khan, a Safavid Officer  
After the Capture of Bist**

Double-sided folio from The Late Shahjahan Album

Ascribed *raqamah* (work of) Ramdas, border figures attributed to Muhammad Dawla, son of Bhola

Mughal, c. 1654

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 38.1 × 27.5 cm; painting 19.7 × 11.1 cm

Calligraphy signed by *al-faqir* ['the poor'] Mir-'Ali, Bukhara, c. 1540, 17 × 8.6 cm

Inscribed: 'Likeness of Mahdi-Quli Khan. The fortress of Bist was taken from this one. Drawn by Ramdas'

*Provenance*

Sotheby's 23 April 1979, property of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, lot 126

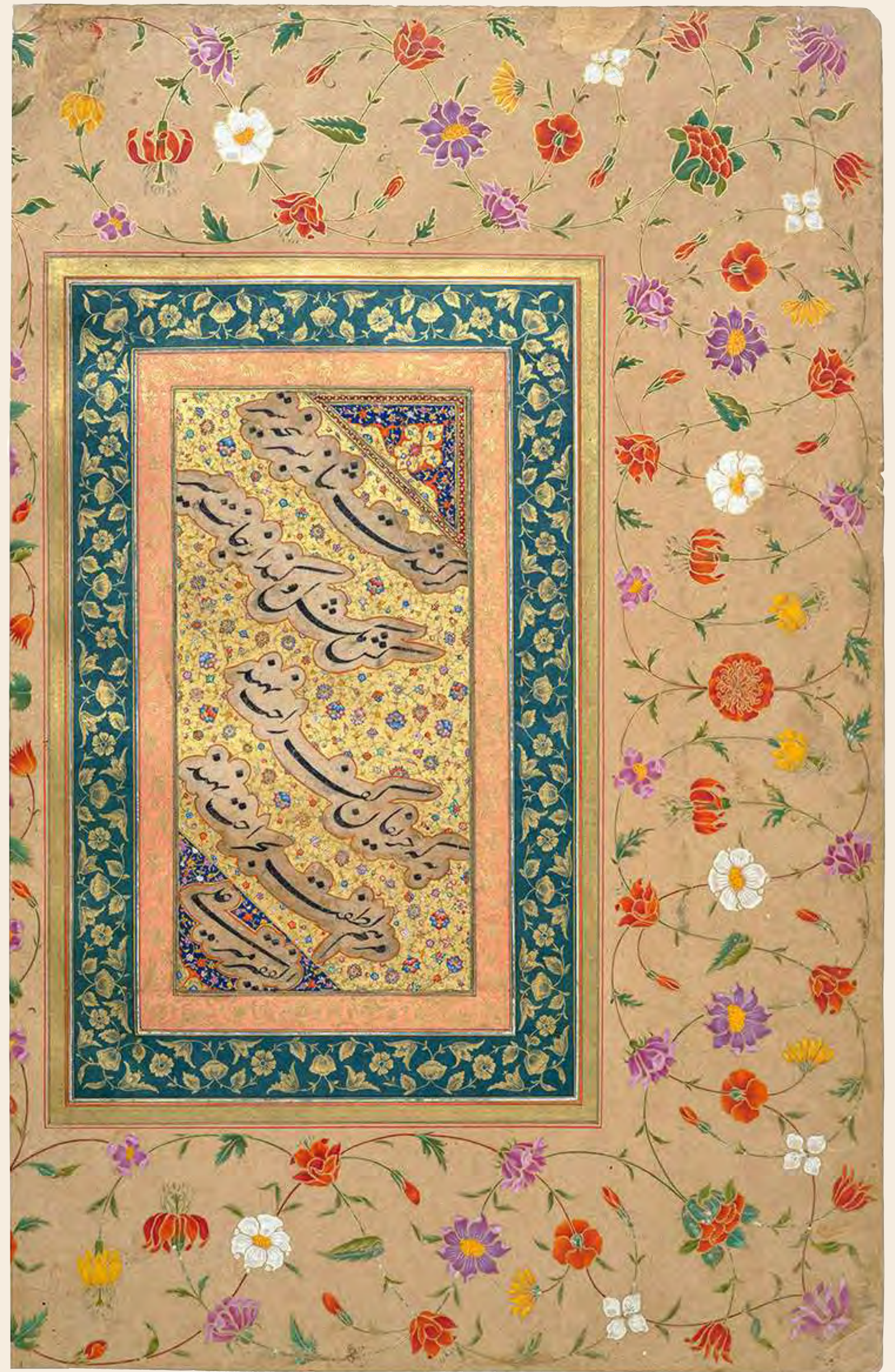
For further provenance and additional notes: see last paragraph

The portrait of the former Persian commander occupying the centre of this large-format album page comes with an unusually specific contemporary identification by an unimpeachable source. The handwriting is unmistakably that of Emperor Shahjahan, a conclusion supported by numerous signed inscriptions on the flyleaves of the Mughals' most distinguished manuscripts. His inscription, preserved prominently in an oblong cartouche that runs vertically along the edge of the painting field, declares that the portrait is a likeness of Mahdi-Quli Khan, from whom the fortress of Bist was seized, and that it is the work of Ramdas.<sup>1</sup> Historians record the circumstances of the capture of that garrison, stating that Dara Shikoh, who had been placed in charge of the flailing Mughal campaign against the Safavids around Qandahar in modern-day Afghanistan, had directed Rustam Khan to lay siege to Bist from 21 May 1653.<sup>2</sup> After ten days, the siege broke the will of the Safavid defenders, and its commander, Mahdi-Quli Khan, capitulated and joined the Mughal army, though a number of his soldiers valiantly chose to struggle to the end despite Dara's threat of a massacre. Mahdi-Quli Khan was presumably rewarded with appropriate honors, a status commemorated in this elevating portrait. Dara was unable to hold the newly conquered Bist, and within a few months abandoned it for Qandahar, effectively bringing to an end the ill-fated venture against the Safavids under of Shah 'Abbas II for control of Kabul and Afghanistan. Shahjahan regarded this failure as yet another incident in Dara Shikoh's chequered military performance. It is tempting to speculate if that assessment figured in the emperor's decision to become involved so personally in the pictorial record of his defeated opponent.

In this formal portrait, Mahdi-Quli Khan appears tall, dignified, and somewhat wearied. He is distinguished facially by an exceedingly long handlebar moustache that crosses over his stubbly beard and trails down both sides of his neck to reach his collar. His eyes are greyish-green, his eyebrows soft and three-dimensional, and his skin above and below the eye weathered by age. The hands have sharply drawn contours and a smooth surface, the left hand fingering the hilt of a curving sword and the right one cupped slightly with the thumb graced by an archer's ring. The large and bulging shape of his turban is characteristic of late Safavid fashion, and its high, forward-projecting aigrette is a mark of the figure's elevated status. The rendering of the turban itself is a tour de force depiction of tightly wrapped cloth, with the gold segments of the fabric forming a pattern that ripples across the bulbous orange mass.









Conversely, Mahdi-Quli Khan's golden robe cuts a long and almost completely flat shape within the painting, the few long pleats minimised and the shimmering surface setting off the repeated motif of pink roses, whose eye-catching form and beautiful colour occur with subtle variations. The enamelled handle of the dagger at the waist and the twisted cloth that binds the *jama* there are detailed meticulously. The figure stands on a patch of low, olive-green ground softened at its lower and upper edges with faint, feathery grasses. In the hazy distance lie some indistinct trees and several clusters of buildings, none sufficiently fortified, however, to be regarded as an allusion to the fortress at Bist.

The artist Ramdas responsible for this portrait has mistakenly been conflated with his namesake, an Akbar-period painter whose career in the 1580s and 1590s is well-documented.<sup>3</sup> Instead, this Ramdas is properly known from two signed illustrations in the Royal Library *Padshahnama* (ff. 48b and 51a), and four other ascribed or attributed single-figure portraits.<sup>4</sup> All these works reveal Ramdas to be a technically accomplished painter, albeit one working in a straightforward, precise manner with no obvious stylistic idiosyncrasies.

The folio belongs to the so-called Late Shahjahan Album, a document has been studied now for decades, most comprehensively by Elaine Wright in 2008.<sup>5</sup> This example follows a familiar format: a painting – usually a portrait of a member of the imperial family or an eminent Mughal noble – on one side of the folio, and a specimen of calligraphy, nearly every of which is by the revered Mir-'Ali, on the reverse. This arrangement ensures that every opening of two opposing pages in the album pairs calligraphy and painting. Although a few of the central paintings date to earlier decades, and were simply inserted into newly devised album pages, most date to the 1650s, a fact suggested by the number of depictions of Shahjahan in old age, but corroborated firmly in this case by the circumstances under which Mahdi-Quli Khan entered the Mughal orbit in 1653. Approximately one hundred folios from the album are known, some of which were split and rebaked in the early 20th century in order to increase their marketing value.

The borders on the painted sides of folios of The Late Shahjahan Album are especially noteworthy. They invariably consist of large-scale, fully coloured figures placed in the upper, outer, and lower margins, most often featuring types of figures complementing the subject of the central painting. In this case, they are servants in Persian dress who seem to attend the onetime Safavid commander, perhaps presenting some of the imperial largesse bestowed upon him. In the upper margin, a seated middle-aged man with a broad handlebar moustache wears a golden waistcoat adorned with motifs of bright red Turkish tulips over a reddish-brown, centre-fastened garment. He holds up a ruby and looks across a red tray that displays two daggers, both with ivory hilts, one carved into a horse's head in the Mughal manner, as well as a pearled tassel. Responding to his gesture and glance is a kneeling youth with a furry cap and a robe with bold orange and gold stripes. One might speculate that such masterful figures might well be the work of Ramdas, who produced the central portrait, but this practice is not borne out in this example or any other. Instead, this figure is exceedingly similar to a border figure on another Late Shahjahan Album folio that uniquely (thus far) is signed by Muhammad Dawla, son of Bhola, so much so, in fact, that he and the other border figures on this folio can be confidently attributed to him.<sup>6</sup> This artist, whose work is otherwise undocumented, also created the border figures on one other Late Shahjahan Album page and possibly others.<sup>7</sup> His supporting role in this project makes sense both





stylistically and chronologically, for his father, Bholā, is a known imperial artist who was active in the *Padshahnama* and worked in a similar manner.<sup>8</sup>

Answering this pair of figures is another pair in the lower border who again handle jewels and luxurious weapons. A seated man dressed in a Persian centre-fastened robe holds a tray with seven pearls and reaches towards an open black-lacquered chest. Two more oval trays lie between him and the raised chest; the red one holds a *bazuband* (armlet) with a gemstone mounted in the middle; the green one displays a *bazuband* with several pearls. Seated opposite in a casual manner is a youth whose face is shown in three-quarter view. He leans on a golden *pandan* (a container for digestives) and gestures across his body towards the objects put on show to his left: a red rectangular tray with two plumed turban ornaments standing upright, a green oval tray with two daggers (one with a horse-headed handle) lying across it, and the lacquered chest displaying a sword with a decorated white scabbard. Taking advantage of the less vertically constrained spaces of the outer border, the artist Dawla staffs the remainder of the segmented courtly environment with three standing figures of varying ages bearing in turn a tray with two glass bottles wrapped in red cloth, a platter covered with a golden cloth embroidered with floral motifs, and a platter draped with a gold cloth with an arabesque design in purple. The richness of their dress and objects conveys the splendour of the Safavid world previously occupied by Mahdi-Quli Khan. Completing the border decoration are a wide variety of flowering plants freely painted in gold, enlivened discreetly in the upper left by the addition of two flitting insects.

The reverse of this folio features a specimen of calligraphy written by Mir-'Ali al-Haravi (c. 1476–1544), one of the most celebrated Persian calligraphers, who was particularly renowned for his mastery of *nasta'liq*, a script in which he claimed to have surpassed even his own illustrious teacher, Sultan-'Ali al-Mashhadi. Although he was most renowned for his calligraphy, especially individual specimens like the present example, he burnished his reputation with his skill in poetry, chronograms, and riddles. Born in Herat in 1465, Mir 'Ali worked in the royal Timurid workshops there until 1528, when it fell to the rival Uzbeks. He continued his career at Bukhara in the employ of the Shaybanid rulers, 'Ubaydullah and 'Abd al-'Aziz. He was famously prolific as a writer, but his signature was also commonly forged, including by his own students and sometimes with his own tacit permission. His writing, which is characterised by its dramatic use of thick line, was greatly prized by the Mughals, who took advantage of the availability of specimens brought by his pupil's descendants to India from Bukhara about 1600 to procure them in considerable numbers, cut them up into discrete fragments, and rearrange them to make attractive compositions on the album page. They are combined with exquisite illuminations in many of their albums, including the Kevorkian Album and The Late Shahjahan Album.<sup>9</sup>

The verses here, excerpted from the *Tuhfat al-ahrar* ('Gift of the Free'), one of the seven constituent poems in the *Haft awrang* ('Seven thrones') of Jami, are carefully chosen to be paired with a portrait of Mahdi-Quli Khan, for they address a vanquished person and advocate the wisdom of accepting the magnanimity of the victor.

*If the claw of the lion should swipe your head,  
Resistance to it will tire you out.  
Better that your rivals should place the hand of repose,  
That they should place the balm of kindness on your wound.*<sup>10</sup>





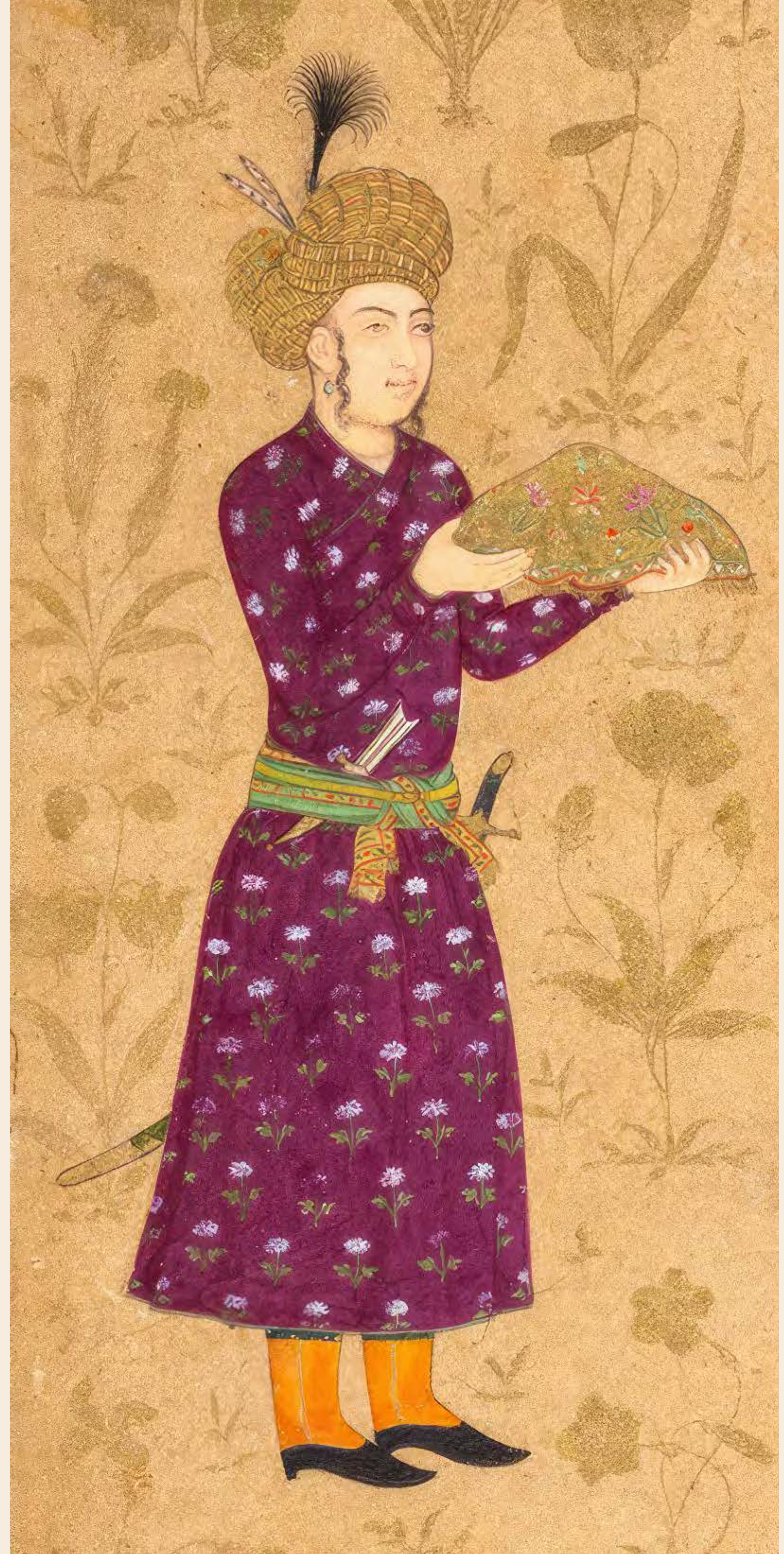
### Additional provenance of the Late Shahjahan Album

(Elaine Wright, 'The Late Shah Jahan Album', in Elaine Wright, ed., *Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2008), pp. 106–139.

The Late Shahjahan Album was taken to Iran from Delhi at the time of Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739 where it remained until the late 19th century. A brother of Nasir al-Din Shah of Iran then took the album to Russia where it was eventually sold to an Armenian dealer, who in turn took it to Paris in 1909 when it was acquired by Georges Demotte. Demotte split many of the folios, rebacking them with paper which allowed the two halves to be sold separately. At least one hundred folios from this album have survived, nineteen of which remain intact, with a picture on one side and calligraphy on the other. Our folio is one of those nineteen intact folios.

It is also a contemporary portrait of the Persian officer, Mahdi-Quli Khan, and has Shah Jahan's inscription on the painting, identifying the subject and the artist.<sup>11</sup>

1. Two more paintings in The Late Shahjahan Album that are ascribed to Ramdas and dated to the mid 1650s are written in a similar cartouche placed vertically on the painting field in the same manner: *Portrait of Shah Nawaz Khan, son of Mirza Rustam*, San Diego Museum of Art 1990.357, published in B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, *Domains of Wonder: Selected Masterworks of Indian Painting* (San Diego, CA: San Diego Museum of Art, 2005), no. 57; and *Portrait of Danishmand Khan*, The Raza Library, Rampur, Album 13, f. 14a, published in Barbara Schmitz and Ziyad-Din A. Desai, *Mughal and Persian Paintings and Manuscripts in The Raza Library, Rampur* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2006), pl. 98.
2. Banarsi Prasad Saksena, *History of Shah Jahan of Delhi* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1958), p. 233.
3. For a comprehensive list of Akbar-period paintings by Ramdas, see Som Prakash Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Work* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 336–337. Milo Beach, in Beach, Koch, and Thackston, *King of the World*, p. 217, asserts that it is probable that he is the same artist as the one active during the latter part of Shahjahan's reign, though this would implausibly necessitate an active career at least seventy-two years long with a gap of some forty years in the middle.
4. *Jahangir Receives Prince Khurram on His Return from the Deccan on 10 October 1617*, and *Shahjahan Receives His Three Eldest Sons and Asaf Khan during His Accession Ceremonies*, c. 1640, published in Beach et al. 1997, pls. 8 and 11; and the latter in Hannam, *Eastern Encounters*, no.30, pp. 120–121. In addition to the two works cited in n. 1, Ramdas is known from two portraits of Prince Sulayman Shikoh (1635–52), one a painting of c. 1652 in the Royal Library (RCIN1005069.e), published in Hannam, *Eastern Encounters*, no.36; the other an attributed drawing of the same figure published in Christie's 2 April 2020, lot 74.
5. Elaine Wright, 'The Late Shah Jahan Album', in Elaine Wright, ed., *Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2008), pp. 106–139.
6. San Diego Museum of Art 1990.353, published in *San Diego Museum of Art: Selections from the Permanent Collection* (San Diego, CA: San Diego Museum of Art, 1993), pp. 80–81. The tiny inscription written on the book held by the standing youth in the lower right had previously been read as Muhammad Dawla, son of La'l, but better photographs now yield an inscription that reads 'Allahu Akbar 'amal-i Muhammad Dawla walad-i Bhola [alternatively Bula].
7. *Portrait of 'Abd al-Rahim Khankhanan*, attributed to Govardhan, dated A.H. 1017/1608–09 C.E., Yale University Art Gallery 1983.4.11.





8. *Padshahnama* 71a (signed), and ff. 70b, 126b–127a, and 218b (attributed), published in Beach, Koch, and Thackston, pls. 12, 13, 27, 28, and 45.

9. For a cogent account of Mir-'Ali's career and work, see Wheeler Thackston in Stuart Cary Welch, Annemarie Schimmel, Marie L. Swietochowski, and Wheeler M. Thackston, *The Emperors' Album* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), pp. 32–37; many specimens of Mir-'Ali's calligraphy are reproduced in subsequent plates. Also useful is Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 430–432.

10. See Husayn Ahmad Tarbiyat, ed., *Mathnavi-yi Haft Awrang*, 2 vols. (Tehran, A.H. 1378/ 1999 C.E.), vol. 1, p. 516. We are grateful to Will Kwiatkowski for this translation and reference.

11. Additional information on provenance Francesca Galloway





### Two Princesses Entertained at Night on a Terrace

Mughal, c. 1690

Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid down on an album page

Folio 39.8 × 28.1 cm; painting 20 × 12.9 cm

Reverse: Calligraphy signed by Abu'l al-Baqa al-Musawi, dated A.H. 1098/1686–87 C.E., 22.3 × 11 cm

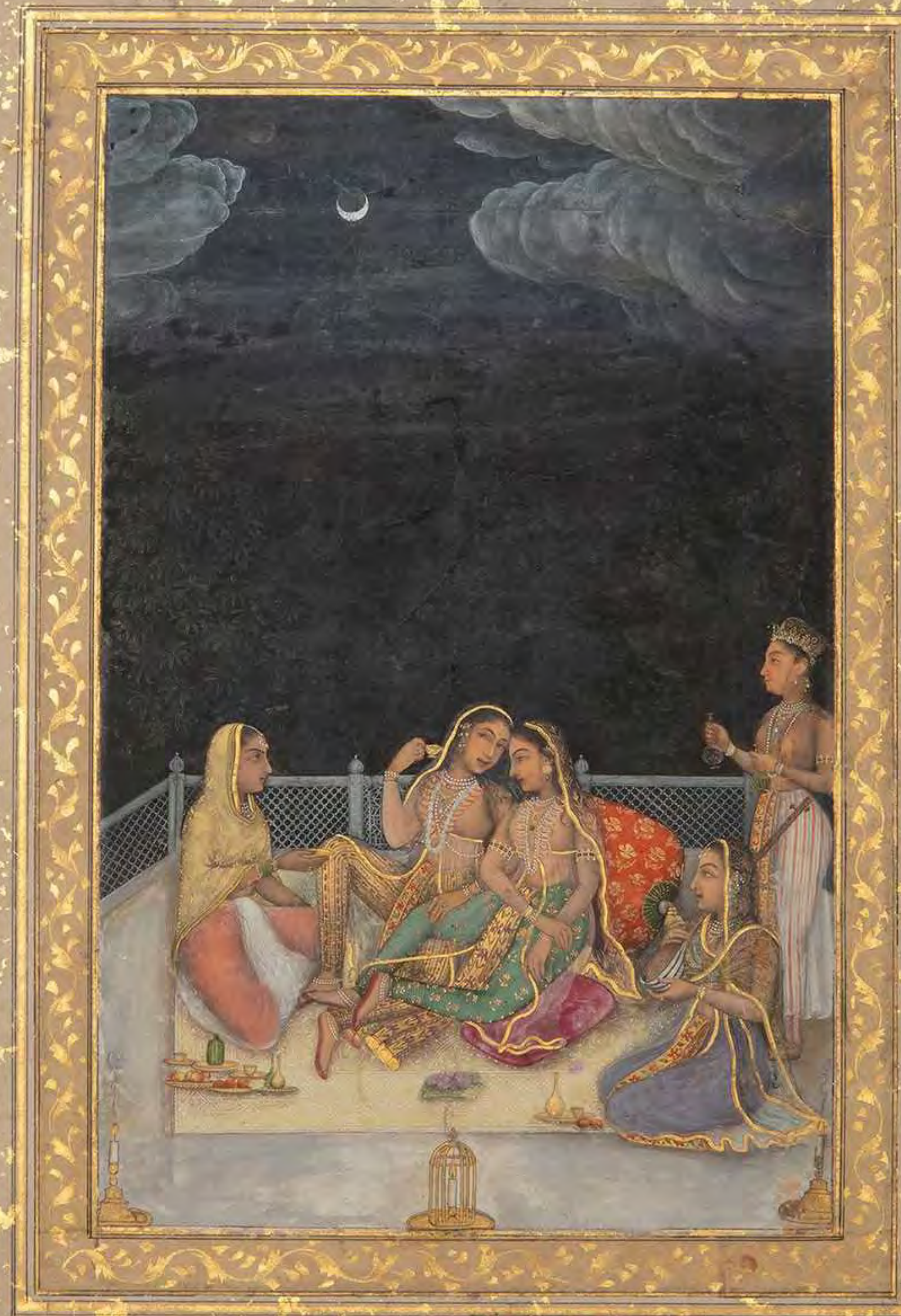
#### Provenance

Private collection, UK

Images of beautiful women relaxing in the imperial *zenana* must have held vicarious appeal for the Mughal court, for most men were barred by protocol from ever venturing into that highly restricted part of the palace. It is also likely that royal women themselves appreciated depictions of their own realm; in fact, one late 17th-century drawing of a gawky pre-adolescent male servant is inscribed with a note indicating that it was made expressly for the amusement of the ladies of the *zenana*. In such a luxurious environment, where wine and music flowed freely, pleasures were savoured, and feelings of intimacy were readily kindled.

This painting captures one such stolen moment in the *zenana*. On a summer's night when the crescent moon has yet to be swallowed up by approaching cloud banks, two princesses lounge together on a terrace that overlooks a shadowy grove of loquat trees. Two attendants stand and kneel nearby, proffering the contents of delicate glass bottles and a shallow golden dish. A lone musician, her lips parted slightly in song, plucks the *tambura* as she serenades the pair of royal ladies. Additional vessels, fruits, and blossoms are arrayed across a yellow floor covering with an unobtrusive pattern. Most of these elements are standard in such formulaic terrace scenes.<sup>1</sup> What creates this painting's compelling emotional warmth, however, are nuances of glance, pose, and painting technique. The two princesses, for example, lean their heads together conspiratorially so that one princess can discreetly receive the confidential whisper of the other, who simultaneously glances outward towards the viewer to watch for potential eavesdroppers. The two women sit very close, the one extending her sprawling leg between those of her companion and the other reciprocating with a hand resting suggestively on it. Curling wisps of smoke rise from three candles, which, along with the fleeting moonlight, bathe the royal coterie in soft, atmospheric light without casting overt shadows. Most of all, every bit of warm-toned flesh is given a sensuous, palpably textured surface. For example, along with the hands and torso of the standing maidservant, the faces of the two princesses and the musician are modelled with tiny, granular marks – an effect reminiscent of the style of the Mughal master Govardhan (active 1596 – c. 1645) and unlike the taut, eggshell-like treatment of faces commonly seen in the work of such mid 18th-century painters as Muhammad Afzal (active c. 1730–40). This artist renders gold-hemmed diaphanous cloth with admirable skill, as exemplified by the sheer garments worn by the princesses, and complements it with a strikingly painterly treatment of heavier but seemingly fluffy fabrics such as those of the seated servant's mustard-coloured shawl, peach-coloured lower garment, and white *patka*. One more unorthodox detail is also distinctive enough to merit mention: the scratchy striations on the figures' forearms that describe the dense network of folds in the sheer material.

Our knowledge of individual Mughal artists operating at the end of the 17 century has deepened considerably in recent years. One painter who has not yet figured





significantly in that revised account is Muhammad Gawhar (or Guhar), previously known from only two ascribed works.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of their pronounced similarities with the present work in the exact shapes of the facial features and hands, and especially the all-over texture marks applied to the face, neck, and hands, this painting and a fine bust-length image of an elegant Mughal lady holding a cup and saucer appear to relate to Muhammad Gawhar.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that an artist this accomplished worked for a Mughal prince such as A'zam Shah (1653–1707), who, along with his sibling, son, and nephew, Princes Mu'azzam (1643–1712), Bidar Bakht (1670–1707), and 'Azim al-Shan (1664–1712), was the face of imperial Mughal patronage of painting in the decades around 1700.

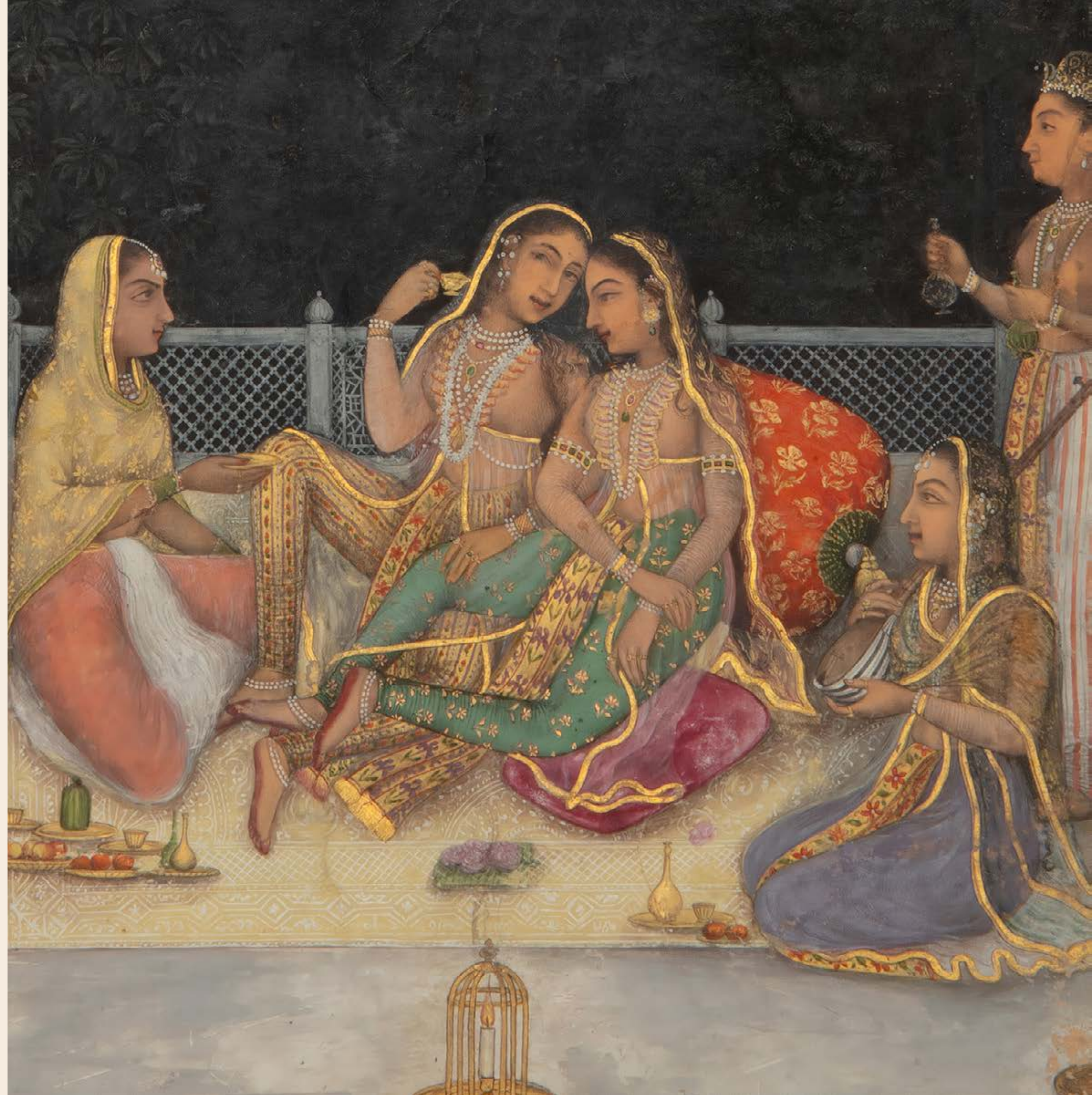
Mounted on the reverse of the folio are verses from a ghazal is a quatrain of Sa'ib Tabrizi (d. c. 1676) written in nasta'liq by the 17th-century calligrapher Abu'l-Baqa al-Musawi in A.H. 1098/1686–87 C.E. From a family of Sayyids from Abarku in central Iran, he lived primarily in Isfahan, but at one point travelled to India, where he left behind a specimen written in Shahjahanabad (Delhi).<sup>4</sup> He was in the service of the physician Taqarrub Khan, who also emigrated to India, where he served as royal physician, as well as Taqarrub Khan's son Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Khan.

1 Indeed, a contemporary painting with practically the same composition and series of poses, albeit with minor differences in the patterns of clothing and floor covering and especially a bright sky at sunset rather than one representing the dark of night was offered at Sotheby's, London, 24 April 2013, lot 82.

2 *Standing Youth*, dated A.H. 1103/1691–92 C.E., published in B.N. Goswamy, Jeremiah P. Losty, and John Seyller, *A Secret Garden: Indian Paintings from the Porret Collection* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2014), cat.9; and *Mirza Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman*, ascribed on the painting *raqamah* Muhammad Gawhar, c. 1690–1700, and published in Sotheby's, London, 26 October 2022, lot 69.

3 Royal Library, Windsor, RCIN 1005068.aa, f. 25r.

4 Christie's, 10 October 2006, lot 118. His career is discussed in Mehdi Bayani, *Ahval va athar-e khushnevisan*, vol. 1, Tehran, A.H. 1345 H.sh./1966 C.E., pp. 22–24.





**Royal Ladies on a Riverbank**

Attributed to Dalchand

Mughal, c. 1710

Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid down on an album page

Folio 39.8 × 28.1 cm; painting 24.2 × 15.1 cm

Reverse: Calligraphy written by *faqir* 'Abd al-Rahim *Roshan Qalam*, c. 1605–15,

11.1 × 4.3 cm

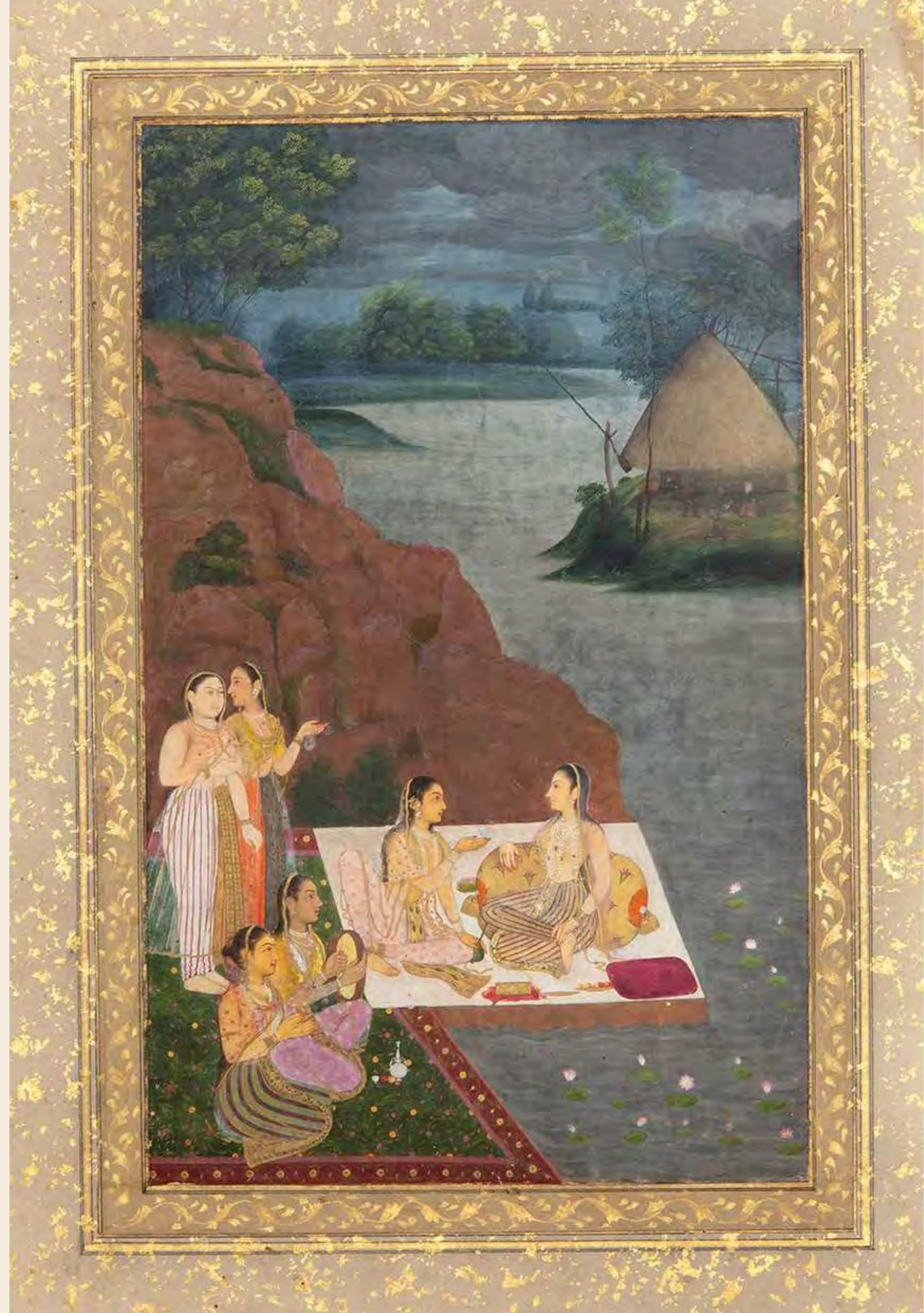
*Provenance*

Private collection, UK

About a third of the composition of this superb painting follows the familiar conventions of Mughal scenes of outdoor leisure. The two central figures – to judge by their poses, demeanour, and the relative costliness of their jewellery, a princess and her confidante – engage in polite conversation. The former sits in a poised, upright manner with a hint of detachment, one arm draped informally over a voluminous bolster and right leg crossed over her opposite thigh, a pose emphasised by the contrasting stripes on her *pajjama*. Conversely, her confidante relaxes in a far more casual and earnest pose, with knees splayed and feet touching, as she tenders a wine bottle in one hand and extends a tiny cup on a saucer with the other. Spread out beneath the pair at a slightly oblique angle is a white floor cloth with a complete border-and-field design. A flat scarlet cushion visually anchors its sharply protruding lower right corner, whilst an open golden vessel placed between the women garners somewhat more attention than usual by virtue of the puzzlingly fluid red form – a cloth? – beneath it. Two figures kneeling on an adjacent carpet with a field of luxuriant scrollwork provide ambient music for the occasion, one playing a *daf* (a large frame drum without cymbals), the other singing and clapping in rhythm. Completing the convivial group are two maidservants standing with dainty handkerchiefs at the ready. The artist presents these two middle-aged figures as a complementary unit, juxtaposing their frontal and profile faces, as well as their pale and mid-tone complexions. And as the sole vertical element within the composition, they help forge a smooth transition to the landscape, which rises up directly behind them as a discrete backdrop in the form of a steep rocky cliff with trees and scrubby vegetation growing in its crevices.

Beyond this painting's thematic core, however, some puzzling incongruities arise. Where the princess and her companion actually sit is a rectangular sandstone *chabutra* (platform) that has been transplanted inventively, without its requisite balustrade, from its customary manmade environment – the intersection of controlled water channels in a formal garden – to a spot that juts out improbably into the untamed river, which, though slow-moving enough for lotuses to grow, still actively laps up against the low platform's front edge. The adjoining green carpet to the left meets the water in an equally abrupt manner that would leave it soaked at the slightest ripple. One might wonder if that the present configuration of *chabutra*, river, and rocky cliff were the result of some later creative alteration, but this conjecture has not been borne out by a meticulous examination of the painting under high magnification.

The remainder of the composition poses an enigma of its own. Abutting the oasis of royal elegance in the foreground is a rough-hewn vernacular world. The silvery-grey river zigzags into a deep and brooding landscape, and the various types of trees lining





its banks are rendered in the sfumato technique adopted from models in Northern European art. The sky, too, is filled with dark and vaguely ominous clouds that are out of keeping with the characteristically cheery environments of such plein-air scenes of Mughal leisure. Undoubtedly the most striking element in this exotic terrain is the conical thatched hut that dominates a low shoreline bluff in the middle ground. Erected beside it is a lift net, a fishing device whose visible parts consist of a long pole mounted on a split-top upright and a counterbalancing stone weight on the short end. This kind of contraption is used in many parts of the world, including southern India, but it is depicted only twice elsewhere in Indian painting in conjunction with the tall conical hut, which stands near some slender tree trunks and a rustic fence.<sup>1</sup> In the murky area before the hut are five indistinct figures, three of whom engaged in conversation, as well as a sleeping dog curled up near a campfire. Yet they are not, as one might expect in this foreign-inspired world, some genre figures plucked from a European model, for the closest of the figures clearly wears an Indian turban. All in all, then, this painting is a highly original amalgam of traditional imperial Mughal painting and foreign motifs and visual effects.

The painting is attributed here to Dalchand, a well-known Mughal painter who followed his father, Bhavanidas, into service in a princely atelier, possibly that of Prince Mu'azzam, in Lahore; he subsequently took up residence in Delhi shortly before the death of Emperor 'Alamgir in 1707, and produced his earliest known painting about 1705.<sup>2</sup> In 1724, Dalchand left Delhi for a sojourn at the Rajasthani court of Jodhpur, and in 1728 shifted to the nearby court of Kishangarh, fostering at each place a Mughalised hybrid style. The Mughal phase of Dalchand's career is documented by just two ascribed paintings, one a similar scene of ladies relaxing on a formal terrace,<sup>3</sup> the other a version of the fabled story of Madhavanala-Kamakandala.<sup>4</sup> Both works feature multiple women who are so similar to those in the present painting that they are practically interchangeable. As in those examples, Dalchand infuses his range of facial types with qualities shaped by the customary social code of beauty, with the artist's most elegant faces and clothing reserved for women of the highest station. Nonetheless, even the two young musicians here are endowed with handsome features and enticing bright-eyed expressions. Embodying a different type altogether is the round-faced senior maidservant, who occurs with comparable facial fulness and attendant roles in Dalchand's two ascribed paintings. Finally, the artist also handles in a distinctive manner the challenge of rendering a virtually sheer *dupatta* (veil) passing over skin, hair, and clothing. He flaunts his prodigious technical ability most conspicuously in the *dupattas* of the princess and the round-faced attendant.

On the reverse of the folio are Persian verses consisting of a story from Sa'di's *Bustan* written in nasta'liq by *faqir* (literally, 'the poor', a self-effacing term) 'Abd al-Rahim *Roshan Qalam* ('Bright Pen'), one of the most esteemed Mughal calligraphers of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. 'Abd al-Rahim's distinguished family of scribes hailed from Herat in Afghanistan, but he personally first found employment in India with 'Abd al-Rahim Khankhanan, who in 1590 presented him to Emperor Akbar in recognition of his prowess in nasta'liq. 'Abd al-Rahim wrote some of the greatest manuscripts of the period, including the 1595 British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami, whose colophon was enhanced in 1610 with a double-portrait of the painter Dawlat and the calligrapher himself. In 1604, 'Abd al-Rahim was awarded with the title of *Ambarin Qalam* ('Ambergris Pen'), the epithet by which he is usually known.<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, he was also honoured – presumably by the subsequent emperor, Jahangir – with a second epithet, *Roshan Qalam* ('Bright Pen'), which the calligrapher proudly includes with his signature in the colophon of a manuscript of *Chihil majlis* dated A.H.





1020/1611\_12 C.E.<sup>7</sup> His latest known work, now in Aligarh Muslim University, is dated A.H. 1037/1627–28 C.E.

1. *Prince on a Terrace*, c. 1710, formerly in the Seitz collection, published in Seyller 2010, cat.16; folio from the Davis Album, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 30.95.174.10 (30).
2. For a comprehensive account of the artist's career, see Terence McNerney, 'Dalchand', in Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, and B.N. Goswamy, eds., *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100–1900* (Zurich, 2011), vol. 2, pp. 563–578. The presence of a seal on the reverse naming a librarian in 'Alamgir's service attests to the completion of the painting during 'Alamgir's reign, i.e., by 1707, rather than c. 1710, as McNerney has published it.
3. Polsky collection, published in McNerney 2011, fig. 1; and Andrew Topsfield, ed., *In the Realm of God and Kings: Arts of India* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2004), no.144, pp. 326–327; Christie's, South Kensington, 13 April 2000, lot 287.
4. Location unknown, published in Pundole's (Mumbai), 9 April 2015, lot 120; McNerney 2011, fig. 2; Sotheby's, London, 11 July 1972, lot 54.
5. This manuscript (Or. 12208) is published by Barbara Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami* (London: British Library, 1995).
6. Brief summaries of the calligrapher's career appear in John Seyller, *Workshop and Patron: The Freer Ramayana and Other Illustrated Manuscripts of 'Abd al-Rahim* (Washington, D.C.: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1999), p. 52; and under the rubric 'Abd al-Rahim 'Anbarin Qalam, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1, Fasc. 2, pp. 140–141. Another account in Farsi is provided in Mehdi Bayani, *Ahval va athar-e khushnevisan*, vol. 2, Tehran, 1345 H.Sh/1966 C.E., pp. 389–391. Many individual signed works are listed in Anthony Welch and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Arts of the Islamic Book. The Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 166–167.
7. Khan Sahib Maulvi Zafar Hasan, *Specimens of Calligraphy in the Delhi Museum of Archaeology* (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1926), no. 36, and p. 10.





### Krishna on a Composite Elephant

Golconda style in the Northern Deccan, perhaps Aurangabad, c. 1750  
 Opaque pigments with silver and gold on paper  
 Folio 23.5 × 16.5 cm

#### Provenance

Collection of Zarrina and Antony Kurtz  
 Collection of Françoise and Claude Bourrelier, Paris, 1977–2014  
 Sotheby's, 20 July 1977, lot 42

#### Published

Losty, J.P., *Indian Painting 1590–1880*, Oliver Forge & Brendan Lynch, New York exhibition, 2015

Krishna attired as a prince is riding an elephant composed of nine young women. Some are in dance poses and others play musical instruments including a tambura, sarangi, double-ended drum and unusually a bagpipe. Krishna here is a powerfully built young prince, rather than the boy who played with the gopis' affections in the woods of Brindaban. He is wearing a gold crown with a peacock-tail finial with a dependent tail piece that covers the back of his neck and his shoulder. This latter feature is found in two representations of Krishna in a small set of northern Deccani Rasikapriya paintings in the British Library, tentatively dated 1720–30 (Add.21475, ff. 4 and 8, see Losty,<sup>1</sup> where Krishna wears a tall conical crown typical of southern India, see also Falk and Archer 1981, no. 427(iv)<sup>2</sup>. The crown in our painting with its peacock finial suggests influence from Rajput court styles, indicating perhaps a provenance in Aurangabad where Rajput nobles were still serving in the Mughal armies in the Deccan.

The women wear a bodice and either a dhoti or a sari pulled between their legs in the north Deccan fashion and up over their shoulders. The ground is simply a strip of dark green-blue with sprays of flowers in front of it. The bold outlining of faces, eyes and heads slightly too large for their bodies suggest a date early in the eighteenth century (cf. Zebrowski 1983, figs. 217, 221).<sup>3</sup> The liberal use of gold and silver leaf suggests influence from the southern Hindu icon-painting schools such as Tanjore.

The Golconda/Hyderabad style spread throughout the Deccan and southern India into Hindu court styles in ways which are, as yet little explored. Hindu paintings in early versions of styles such as ours are keys to eventually determine the process of transmission.

Whatever their original meaning, by this time such composite images had become vehicles for artists throughout India to exhibit their skill. Another example of a composite elephant from the Deccan is an early Bijapuri painting, c. 1600, of a prince riding an elephant composed of animals and figures in the Chester Beatty Library (Leach 1995, no. 9.670).<sup>4</sup> A composite horse from Golconda filled with demons and animals is in Berlin (Zebrowski 1983, fig. 135).<sup>5</sup> For a study of the genre with further examples and references, see del Bonta 1999, pp. 69–82.<sup>6</sup>

J.P. Losty





1 Losty, J.P., 'An Album of Maratha and Deccani Paintings – Add. 21475, part 2', see <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2014/06/an-album-of-maratha-and-deccanipaintings-add21475-part-2.html>

2 Falk, T., & Archer, M., *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981

3 Zebrowski, M., *Deccani Painting*, London, Berkeley, Los Angeles & New Delhi, 1983

4 Leach, L.Y., *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings in the Chester Beatty Library*, London, 1995

5 Zebrowski, M., *Deccani Painting*, London, Berkeley, Los Angeles & New Delhi, 1983

6 Del Bonta, R., 'Reinventing Nature: Mughal Composite Animal Paintings' in ed. S.P. Verma, *Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art*, Mumbai, 1999





**Raja Som Bhupal II of Gadwal in Procession**

Deccan, Gadwal, c. 1840–44

Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid down on card

Folio 66 × 76.2 cm

*Provenance*

Private collection, France

Sotheby's, London, 24 May 2007, lot 9

Rev Frederick Lamb who brought the painting back to the UK in 1914

(see last paragraph)

This panoramic processional scene exemplifies a type of portrait that whetted the vanity of many a ruler in India. Beyond the subject's likeness, of course, what distinguishes one regional iteration from another usually lies in the particulars of the dress and insignia, the grandeur and calibrated social hierarchy of the royal entourage and army, and the terrain dominated by the royal presence. The ruler, the largest and most prominent figure in this painting, is naturally placed in the centre. He is exalted by a standard nimbus, dressed in fine, practically translucent raiment complemented by silvery (actually tin) jewellery, and mounted on a richly caparisoned and visually striking piebald horse. Following close behind are attendants whose roles are virtually ubiquitous: a parasol-bearer, two peacock-feather *morchhal*-bearers, and a man carrying a hookah, its long hose passing behind the ruler so that he can smoke even as he rides. Riding in the sovereign's wake are two rows of eight individualised but slightly smaller chieftains arrayed in a single file. Here, as elsewhere, a thin ridge of schematic rocks creates a distinct register to organise the composition. The ruler is preceded by an honour guard of sorts, its members carrying ceremonial maces, muskets, standards, long spears, and even the royal cup. Filling out the remainder of the royal party are two elaborately caparisoned but riderless horses with their syces, two hounds and their handlers, a falconer, men entrusted with the ruler's sword and bow, as well as two others with a ceremonial fan and a kind of pouch.

After a quiet interlude of a nearly empty green section, a device incorporated to set off the nimbate ruler and his parasol, the artist fleshes out the scene with a panoramic landscape, where he reduces the scale of elements and quickens their visual rhythm. For example, he enlists a long row of tiny sepoy (foot-soldiers) dressed in British-style uniform as a foil for larger and more distinctive figural groups, including an elephant carrying a large pendant with Hanuman as its emblem. Six successive elephants transport a *mahi-maratib* (a prestigious fish standard), other insignia, and a pair of kettle drums, with the centremost creature outfitted with an elaborate but empty *ambari* (a type of howdah), presumably for use by the ruler under the proper circumstances. Many other passages – a hunting cheetah and two cannons borne on separate bullock carts, an active hunt of boar, troops in discrete rows, and additional individualised horsemen – make for a splendid display of royal power and prerogatives. Undulating grassy ridges crisscross the landscape, and isolated blue-grey outcroppings punctuate the terrain in a manner seen frequently on the Deccan plateau. The painting culminates in a sky whose uppermost strip is an exuberant exercise in painterly play.

The painting exhibits an obvious stylistic kinship with procession scenes in Hyderabadi painting by Venkatchellam.<sup>1</sup> The central figure, however, belongs not to the Nizam's court proper, but to the small and little-known *samasthan* of Gadwal, one









of fourteen tributary states of the Nizam's territory.<sup>2</sup> A key diagnostic element is the distinctive headgear worn by the Gadwal ruler and many of his retainers, which is a variant of Mysore-style turbans that features a pronounced horizontal element projecting to the rear. The central figure himself can be identified as Raja Som Bhupal II (r. 1840–44), the adopted son of Venkatlakshamma, the widowed queen of Raja Sitaram Bhupal (r. 1807–40). His identity is established by comparison to an inscribed drawing<sup>3</sup> and several large horizontal portrait paintings, including one of him in procession.<sup>4</sup> Debauchery and political turmoil beset the short-lived reign of Raja Som Bhupal II, which ended with the ruler's assassination in 1844. Nonetheless, his reign saw an unexpected florescence of painting in the region, an outgrowth of a newfound taste for painting that began only about 1825 when rulers of various *samasthans* set up palaces in Hyderabad and were thus exposed to the cultural activities of that court. In all likelihood, this Gadwal painting was done by an artist trained in one of Hyderabad's painting workshops.

Gadwal paintings are exceedingly limited in number, and have appeared on the art market only rarely. An accompanying inscription by the former owner underscores this by documenting the acquisition of this work more than one hundred years ago:

The picture was brought home by my father, Rev Frederick Lamb, during the 1914 war. My father had lived in Secunderabad and had been chairman of the Methodist Hyderabad District. / 25 June 1970.

1. For examples of this style, see John Seyller and Jagdish Mittal, *Deccani Paintings, Drawings, and Manuscripts in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art* (Hyderabad: Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, 2018), vol. 1, figs. 33–34, pp. 230–231, and 234.
2. Gadwal was founded in 1290, and its capital lies 192 km southwest of Hyderabad. The history of Gadwal and the development of painting in that *samasthan* are presented in Seyller and Mittal, *Deccani Paintings*, vol. 2, pp. 356–365.
3. An unpublished inscribed portrait drawing of Raja Som Bhupal II of Gadwal is preserved in the Salar Jung Museum MSP 681.
4. See Seyller and Mittal, *Deccani Paintings*, vol. 2, figs. 36–38, and 40, especially fig. 36, p. 356.





**A Chestnut Munia (*Lonchura atricapilla*) Sitting on a Branch of the Diospyros Species**

Folio from the Impey Album

Company School, Calcutta, signed by Zain al-Din for Lady Impey and dated 1779

Opaque pigments on paper

Folio 59 × 83 cm

Inscribed in Urdu: *'The ga'u tree'* and *'Naklol'*

*Provenance*

Jane Greenough Green collection and thence by descent

The Linnean Society

Sir Elijah and Lady Impey, their sale at Phillips London 21 May 1810

*'The gau'u tree'*

This is clearly a spelling of the word gab, which is used in Bengal for trees of the *Diospyros* genus.<sup>1</sup>

*'Naklol'*

According to Francis Buchanan, naklol is the name for the *Loxia malacca* (*Lonchura malacca*), or Tricoloured Munia.<sup>2</sup> However, in appearance the bird in the painting, which has a brown breast, is clearly the Chestnut Munia (*Lonchura atricapilla*). This can be explained by the fact that the two birds were previously regarded as conspecific.

*'Zayn al-Din'*

Shaikh Zain ad-Din, from Patna north of Calcutta, was trained as a Persian court painter in the naturalistic Mughal tradition. By the late eighteenth century, many Mughal-trained artists in eastern India were looking for patronage to the emerging British ruling class. By 1774 Shaikh Zain-ad-Din had moved to Calcutta where he was commissioned by Lady Impey to depict the flora and fauna of India. Her husband, Sir Elijah, was Chief Justice of Bengal from 1774 to 1782. The Impeys were fascinated by the exotic flora and fauna of the sub-continent and kept a private zoo on their estate at Calcutta. Lady Impey commissioned three Patna artists, Shaikh Zain ad-Din being the most gifted, to meticulously record, where possible in life size, the floral and fauna in their garden and menagerie. Sir Elijah concentrated on his collection of Oriental manuscripts.

This watercolour comes from a set of 326 paintings by Shaikh Zain al-Din and his contemporaries, Bhavani Das and Ram Das, of which 197 were studies of birds, 76 of fish, 28 of reptiles, 17 beasts and 8 of flowers. When the Impeys returned to London in 1783, they showed their collection to ornithologists, who were quick to realise both its scientific and artistic merits. The set was considered significant for two reasons. Firstly, the bird drawings sometimes included the earliest depictions of Indian species and were used by subsequent experts to identify new species. Secondly, the birds were drawn from life 'perched not on the dead stump of European convention, but on a branch of the living tree which it frequented'.<sup>3</sup>

Paintings of birds, animals and flowers had been an important Mughal genre since the time of Jahangir (1606–27), who was a keen amateur naturalist. Shaikh Zain ad-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. In Indian art, the Impey series of natural history drawings are considered the finest of their kind.





In 1809 Sir Elijah died and the collection was sold at Phillips, London on the 21 May 1810. Examples from the Impey series of natural history drawings are now in many public collections around the world including the Linnaen Society, London, the Wellcome Institute, London, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, the Radcliffe Library, Oxford and several international museums and private collections of Indian painting.

J. P. Losty

1. A. P. Benthall, *The Trees of Calcutta and its Neighbourhood*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 293
2. Francis Buchanan, *An Account of the District of Bhagalpur in 1810-11*, Patna, 1939, p. 269
3. See J. P. Losty, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography





**A Trooper of Skinner's Horse**

Attributed to Ghulam Ali Khan

Company School, Delhi, c. 1827

Opaque pigments, gold and silver on paper

Folio 17.3 × 13.1 cm; painting 11.2 × 9.6 cm

Painted oval in gilt-decorated border

Inscribed faintly 'Sardar Auxiliary (?) Corps' in English in pencil just above the lower gold ruling; reverse inscribed 'A Trooper of Col. Skinner's Horse [Corps]'

*Provenance*

Bonhams 19 April 2007, lot 354

Private UK collection; by repute acquired from a house sale in North Wales

This arresting oval portrait shows a *risaldar* (cavalry officer) of the legendary Skinner's Horse, an identity established both by an English inscription on the reverse and the distinctive uniform of 'The Yellow Boys', the moniker given to the contingent of cavalry of 1,000 horsemen first raised by Lt. Colonel James Skinner (1778–1841) in 1803 at Hansi, a town 150 km northwest of Delhi. The Anglo-Indian Skinner was the scion of a Scottish father in the service of the East India Company and a Rajput princess. His mixed-blood heritage shaped his professional prospects. He was initially employed by the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, but upon the victory by British forces in 1803 accepted a position with them instead. Skinner's Horse was disbanded in 1806, but was reconstituted in 1809, its ranks eventually swelling to 3,000 men. For his efforts, Skinner was honoured with the prestigious title 'Companion of the Bath' (CB) in 1826, though not without some complications of rank.

The close-up, bust-length format of the painting offers a remarkably detailed account of the soldier's uniform. The steel Khula Khud, a type of conical helmet, is topped with a yellow plume, and enhanced with a retractable nasal bar and brass aventail, a kind of mail curtain protecting the brow, sides of the head, and neck.

A padded gambeson wraps around the neck and contrasts with the colour and texture of the officer's bushy side whiskers. The reddish-orange jacket is trimmed with fierce-looking fur to form dramatic curving shapes along the figure's shoulder, down his front, and at the split sleeves. The twelve conical balls attached to one side of the open garment are presumably frog-buttons and served as a means to fasten the jacket. A lovely cummerbund spans the abdomen between the officer's yellow sleeves.

This uniform matches exactly those worn in a well-known *darbar* painting of 1827 in which Skinner presides the acceptance of a new recruit into his regiment.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since it is known that the Delhi master artist responsible for that painting, Ghulam Ali Khan (active 1817–52), made numerous preparatory studies of the individually labelled officers included in that large scene, it follows that Ghulam Ali Khan created this work as well.<sup>2</sup> Although several of the officers have complexions, noses, and bushy beards very similar to those of the *risaldar* here, the figure most closely resembling the individual portrayed here – especially in the detail with the corresponding semicircular patches of bare skin just below the lower lip – is labelled Amanat Khan *risaldar*, who is seated at the head of the row of officers on the viewer's right. Yet for all the obvious appeal of the trooper's flamboyant uniform, what makes his portrait truly compelling is Ghulam Ali Khan's ability to capture his subject's cool, self-assured demeanour. This he achieves by rendering a piercing glance, a haughtily raised eyebrow, and the planes and surface of the face built up by innumerable nuanced touches of the brush.





1. National Army Museum, London 1956-02-27-3. Signed 'Work of Ghulam Ali Khan painter resident of the Caliphate of Shahjahanabad completed in the Christian year 1827', the painting is published in William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma, eds., *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707-1857* (New York: Asia Society, in association with Yale University Press, 2012), cat.58. <https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1956-02-27-3>
2. For the career of Ghulam Ali Khan, who made many works for James and William Fraser, see J.P. Losty, 'James Skinner's Tazkirat al-Umara now digitised', British Library Asian and African studies blog 07 August 2014; and Yuthika Sharma in Dalrymple and Sharma, eds., 2012, pp. 41-52.





### Three Portrait Miniatures of Children on Ivory

Company School, probably Delhi, c. 1830–40  
 Opaque pigments and gold on ivory, each affixed to a piece of card  
 Each 6.8 cm diam.

#### Provenance

Collection of Toby Falk  
 Christies London, Anonymous sale, 3 May 1990, lot 28

The tradition of portrait miniatures began in India shortly after 1615 in response to a gift of that type of image by Sir Thomas Roe, an English diplomat to the Mughal court. Imperial Mughal artists soon produced limited numbers of bust-length, oval-format portraits of royalty, starting with Jahangir, Shahjahan, and even Mumtaz Mahal, which could be worn a pendant or turban ornament as a courtly display of deep personal allegiance, or to be cherished intimately in private. Yet ivory eventually replaced parchment as a support for portrait miniatures only in the 18th century, first in Italy, whence the practice spread to other parts of Europe. As several named professional British artists made their way to India in the late 18th century, they cultivated the taste for ivory portrait miniatures amongst East India Company officials and their high-ranking Indian clients. Both sojourning British artists and the Indian painters they trained in the ivory-painting technique responded to the ensuing demand. Ivory was a fragile material cut into small, thin sheets, painted with the portrait likeness, and then attached to a backing of stiff card, sometimes with an intervening layer of metal foil. It was typically set within a locket frame to ensure the physical integrity of the fragile material. Ivory was especially prized for its translucence, which lent a luminous tone to the skin, but its surface properties resisted the sharp lines and thickly applied colours of traditional Indian painting, and required instead a stippled technique that was a staple of Company School painting. Ivory portrait remained popular until the second half of the 19th century, when it supplanted by the new art of photography, and was relegated to being a mere staple of tourist art.

Anonymous artists typically produced portrait miniatures in ivory in sets, depicting, for example, a series of historical figures such as Mughal emperors or royal ladies. Much less common were the images of specific upper-class Indian children portrayed individually, such as the girls in these round examples, particularly those without the overtones of a domestic genre scene conveyed by the presence of a watchful *ayah* (nanny).<sup>1</sup> In this case, the combination of the girls' varying ages, Indian hairstyles, and dress, and interior settings that incorporated a European-style column, a heavy swag, and an Anglo-Indian caned chair suggests the scenario of a doting Anglicised nawab commissioning fashionable likenesses of his three daughters. The portrait of the youngest girl includes the charming detail of a pet Saluki playfully poking its head into the composition, a trope probably inspired by several paintings by the British painter Joshua Reynolds (1723–92).<sup>2</sup> The light palette and softly defined forms point to a date about 1830.





1. See Mildred Archer, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum in association with Mapin Publishing, 1992, cat.no. 248 for examples comparable in subject and style, and pp. 213–227, for a fine overview of ivory painting in India. See also the ivory portraits of the two sons of Nawab 'Ali Shah, King of Awadh, of c. 1840–42, in the British Library (Add.Or. 5710–5711), published in the blog of 8 May 2020.
2. See, for example, *Portrait as a Child of Frances Harris (1784–1847), wife of Sir Galbraith Lowry Cole*; and *A Young Girl and Her Dog*, c. 1780, Tokyo Fuji Art Museum.





**View of the Buland Darwaza, Fatehpur-Sikri**

Delhi, c. 1820

Opaque pigments on paper within black ruled borders

Folio 43.4 × 57.5 cm, undated watermark of W Turner &amp; Son

*Provenance*

Private collection, France

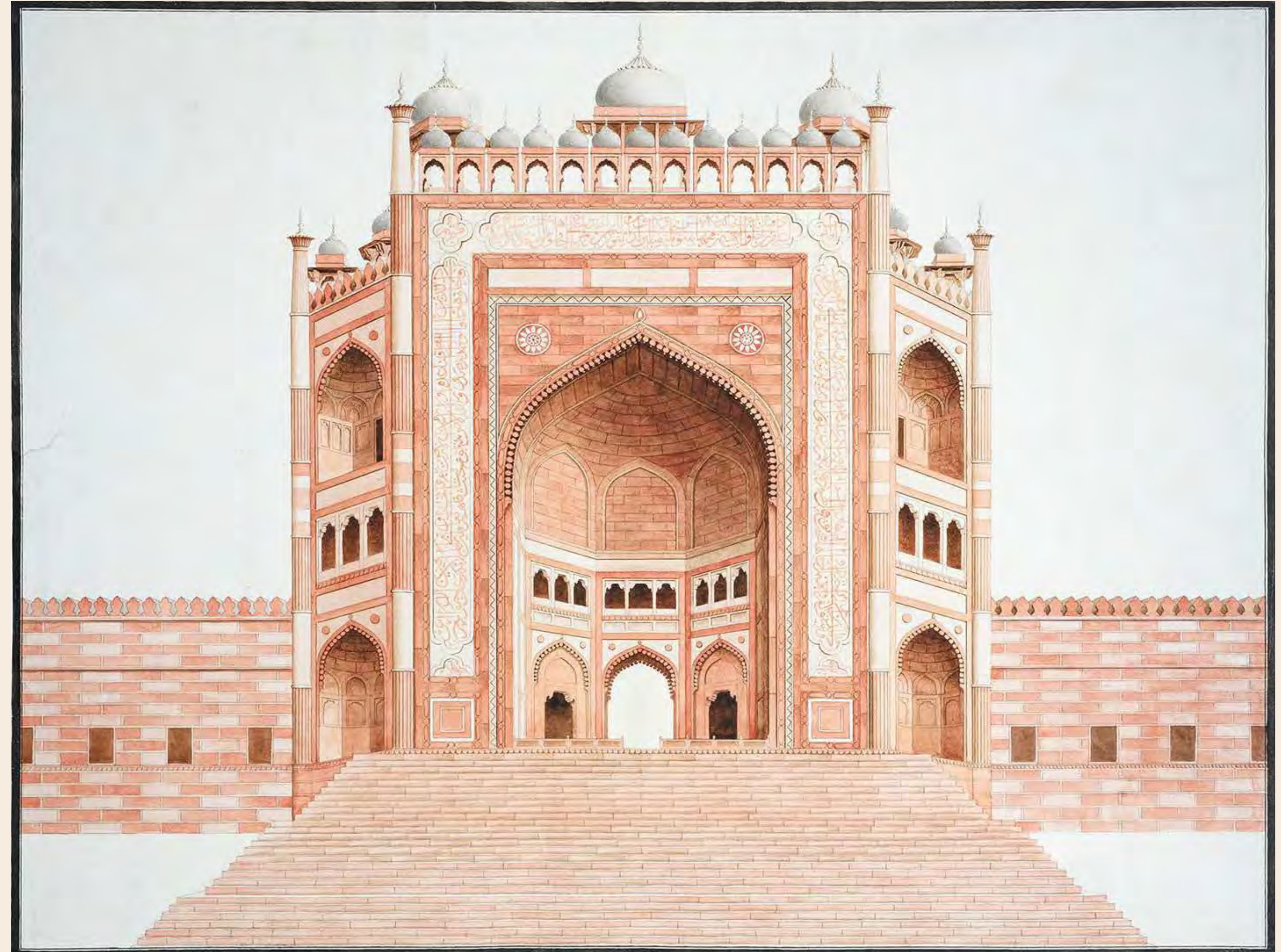
One of the premier monuments of Mughal architecture from the reign of Akbar (1556–1605), the Buland Darwaza (literally, 'Lofty Gateway') is the south entrance to the Jami' Masjid built at Akbar's new capital of Fatehpur-Sikri between 1568 and 1578. Constructed in 1575 ostensibly to commemorate the Mughal victory in Gujarat in 1573, the Buland Darwaza also strengthened connections to the Chishti religious order. Qur'anic verses covering some marble surfaces of its façade were laid out by the calligrapher Ahmad al-Chishti, a follower of Shaykh Salim Chishti, and memorably proclaim the words of Jesus describing the world as only ephemeral and likening it to a bridge to be crossed over by those seeking eternal afterlife.

Made of red and buff-coloured sandstone, the majestic gateway rises a daunting flight of forty-two steps (45 metres) from the road to reach the impressive overall height of 53.6 metres. The gate itself is semi-octagonal in shape, with a large three-tiered central arch, two smaller flanking arched niches, and two series of domed *chattris* or kiosks above.

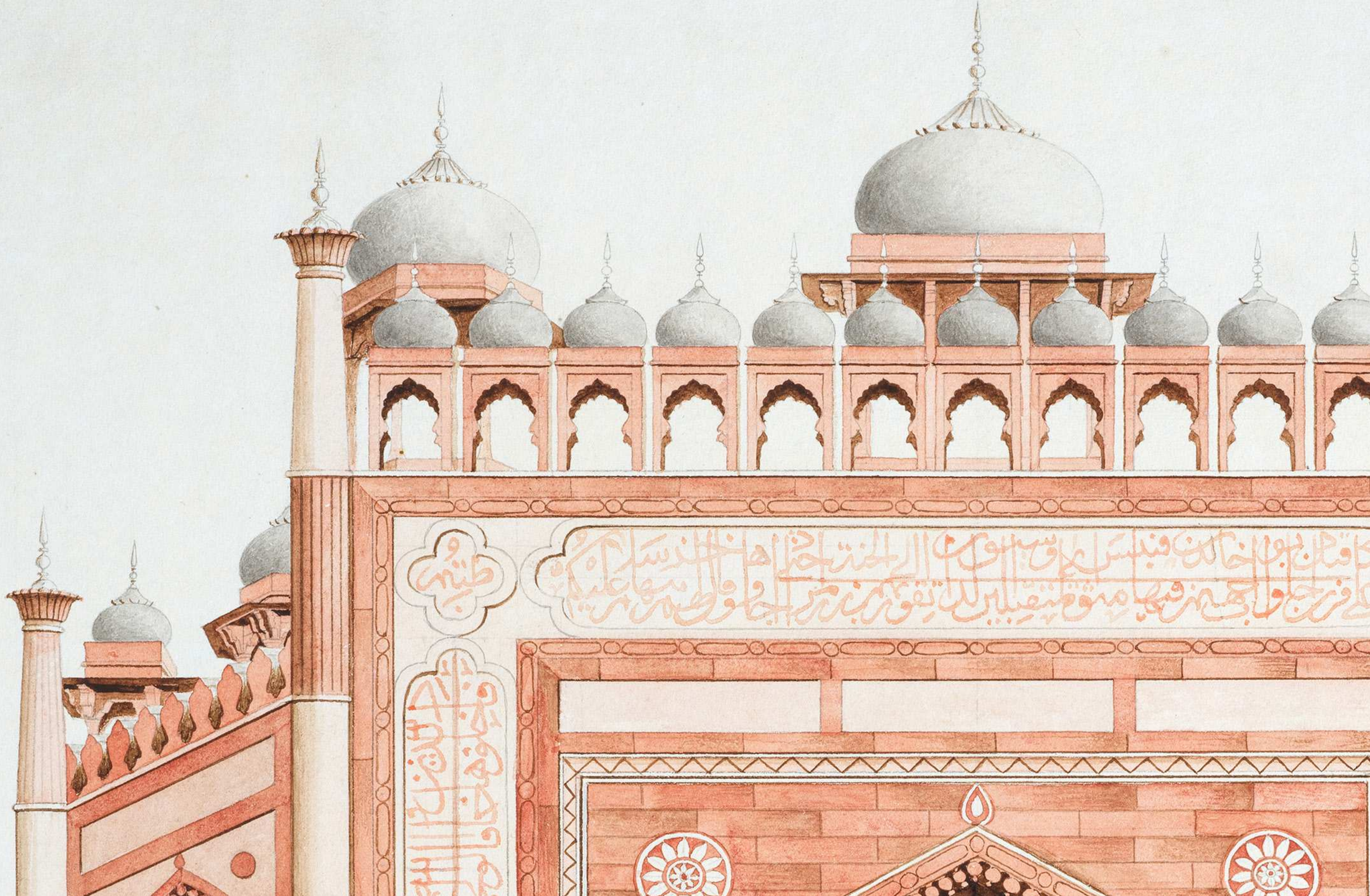
Like many Mughal monuments in and around Delhi and Agra, this stately structure attracted the attention of both British and Indian artists, who employed a European perspectival view and a thin watercolour technique to produce documentary views of buildings, often in series to be compiled into albums of the architectural glories of Mughal India. Possibly modelled after a late 18-c. drawing by a British engineer, these views invariably forgo both an atmospheric quality and a human presence in order to evoke a pristine, detached sense of timeless grandeur. All views of the Buland Darwaza are insistently symmetrical and feature prominently its renowned flight of stairs. Nonetheless, minor variations arise amongst the known specimens.<sup>1</sup> The inscriptions, for example, are less pronounced here than in other versions, which are also frequently distinguished by the presence of captions and decorative rulings. The laid paper has a watermark of W Turner & Son, a known papermaker, which is consistent with a date about 1820.<sup>2</sup>

1. British Museum 1945.1013.0.9.1; Victoria and Albert Museum IS.14–1964; Royal Library, Windsor, RCIN 932755; and Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, *Court Painting from India* (London, 2023), cat.no.31. See also J.P. Losty, *Imperial Past: India 1600–1800* (London: Francesca Galloway, 2011), pp. 12–55.

2. *An Impressive Panoramic View of the Fort at Agra from the River Jumna*, c. 1820, offered at Christie's, London, 10 June 2013, lot 322, is a painting in a similar style that is also done on paper with the same watermark. There is a watermark of W Turner dated 1802, and another undated one of W Turner & Son on a British Library manuscript dated c. 1817. The addition of his son to the name of the family business would logically follow by some fifteen years or so.







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### Great Gate to the Taj Mahal Complex

Company School, Agra, c. 1820

Opaque pigments on paper within black ruled borders

Folio 43.4 × 57.5 cm, undated watermark of W Turner & Son

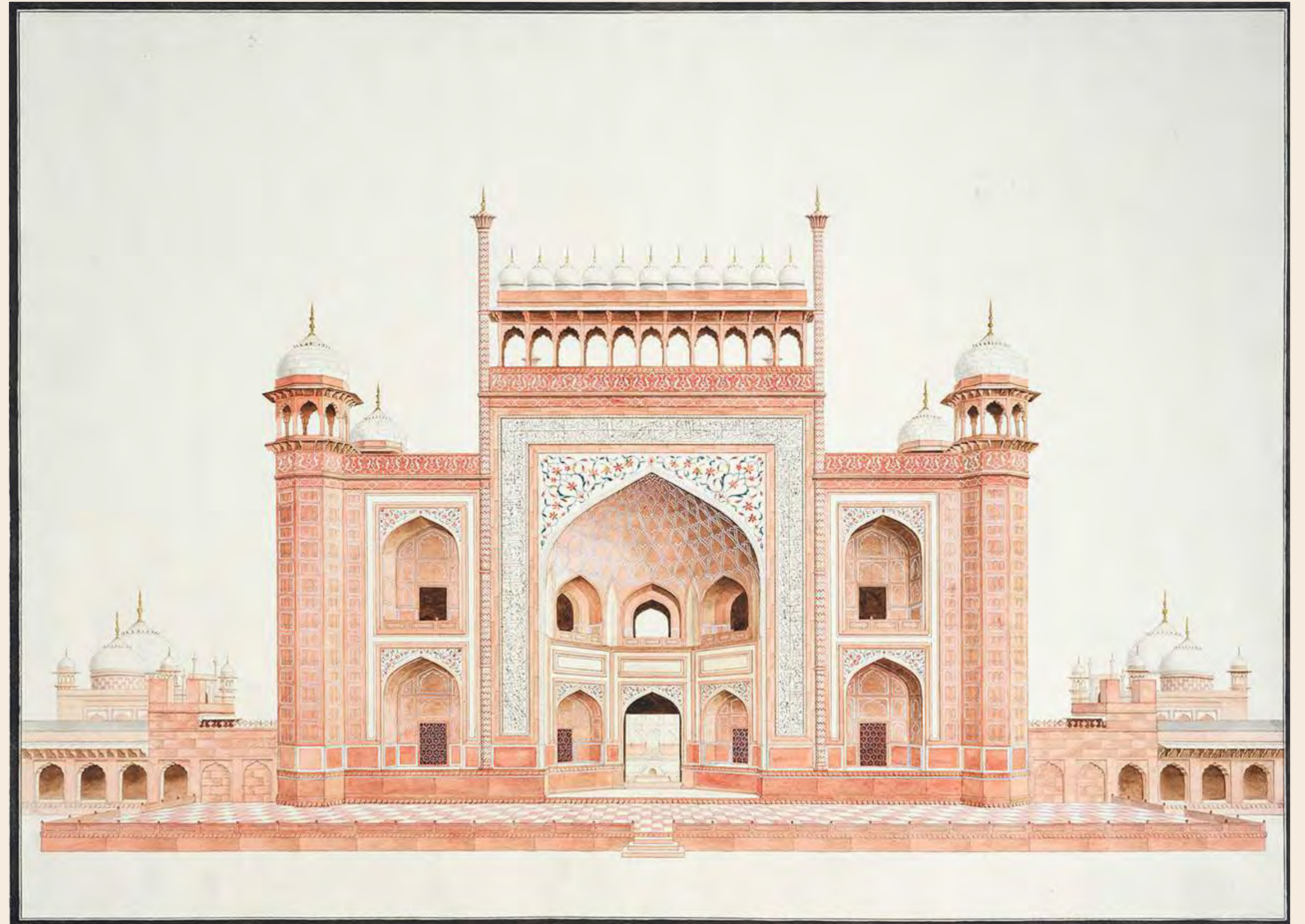
#### Provenance

Private Collection, France

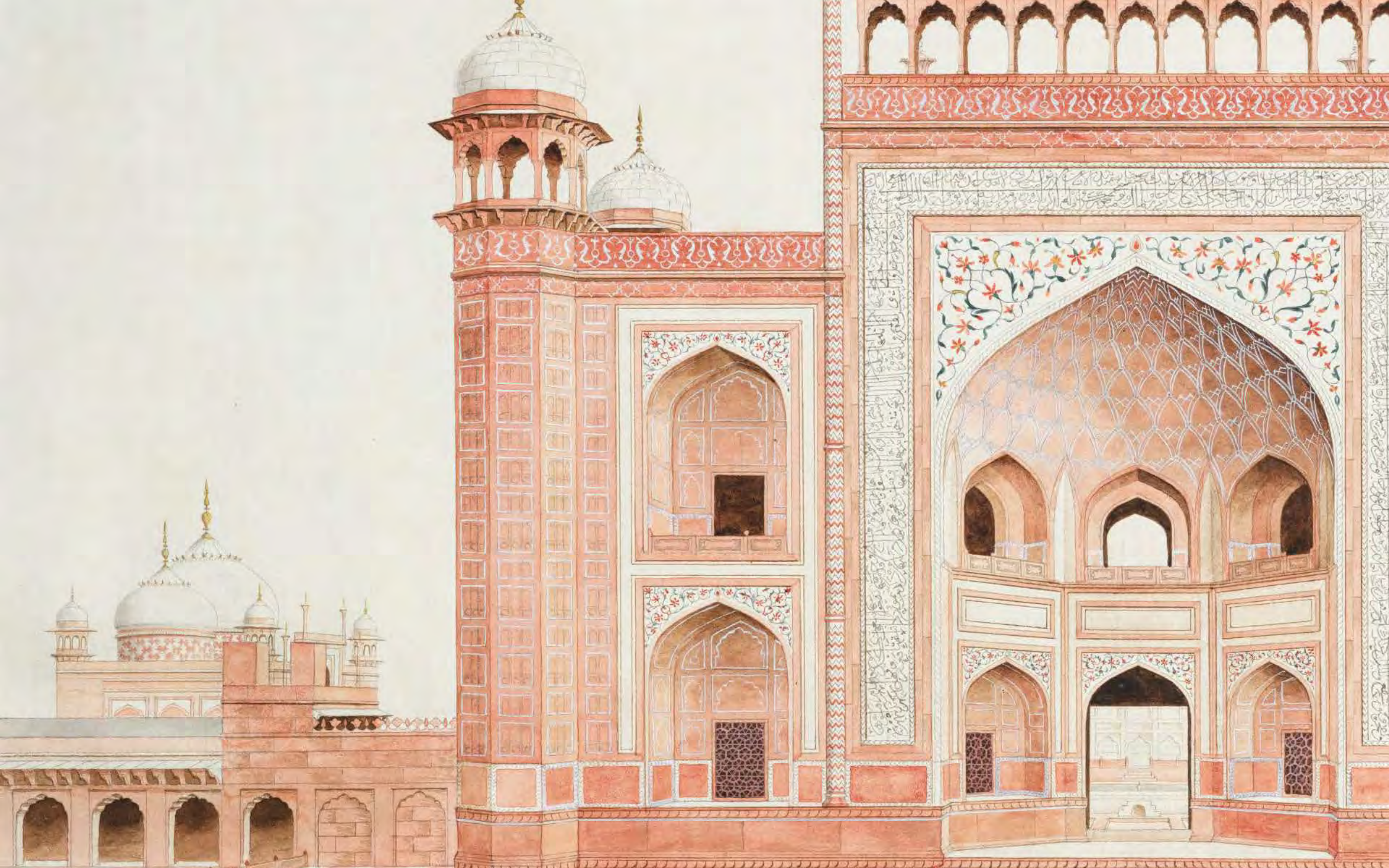
Embedded in the southern portion of the wall that surrounds the large Taj Mahal complex is the Gateway to the Taj Mahal, a sandstone and marble edifice also known as *Darwaza-i rauza* ('Gate of the Mausoleum'). It serves as the primary entrance to the tomb complex and opens onto an expansive quadripartite garden that has paradisiacal associations. The imposing structure is aligned strictly with the mausoleum proper, which sits at the opposite side of the compound, 275 metres to the north. As is well known, Emperor Shahjahan ordered the Taj Mahal built in Agra on the bank of the Jumna River to honour his deceased wife, Arjumand Banu Begum, known as Mumtaz Mahal, who died in childbirth in June 1631. Actual construction began in 1632, and concluded in 1643.

The gateway, constructed of brick but faced in red sandstone and accented in white marble, is square in shape and 30 metres high. Its façade is dominated by a deep and central two-storey archway surrounded by a band of marble that is filled with calligraphy written by a renowned artist later awarded the title Amanat Khan. The gateway's spandrels are adorned with floral scrollwork executed in *pietra dura* inlay.

British and Indian artists working in a European-inspired style produced meticulously detailed views of this famous monument, primarily to meet commercial demand by foreigners. The sheets vary in size, but are all very similar in their symmetrical compositions, exacting level of detail, and light colouring. The present relates most closely to a version offered recently at Sotheby's, including views of the distant red sandstone mosque and Mihman Khana (guesthouse) that flank the white marble mausoleum proper to the west and east, a feature absent in other versions. The present painting has a slightly more removed vantagepoint that allows for a bit more of the adjoining wall and those ancillary buildings to be seen. This greater distance also leaves more empty space before and above the gateway proper. The structure itself appears somewhat more voluminous, with darker voids where doorways in various archways pierce the solid walls.









## 14 & 15

### Three Partial Folios from the *Bhagavata Purana*

Mewar, 1648

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folios 17 × 19 cm (cat 15); 18.2 × 13.4 cm (cat 16); 17.6 × 12.1 cm (unillustrated)

#### Provenance

Private collection USA

Dr Pramod Chandra, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1964–2014)

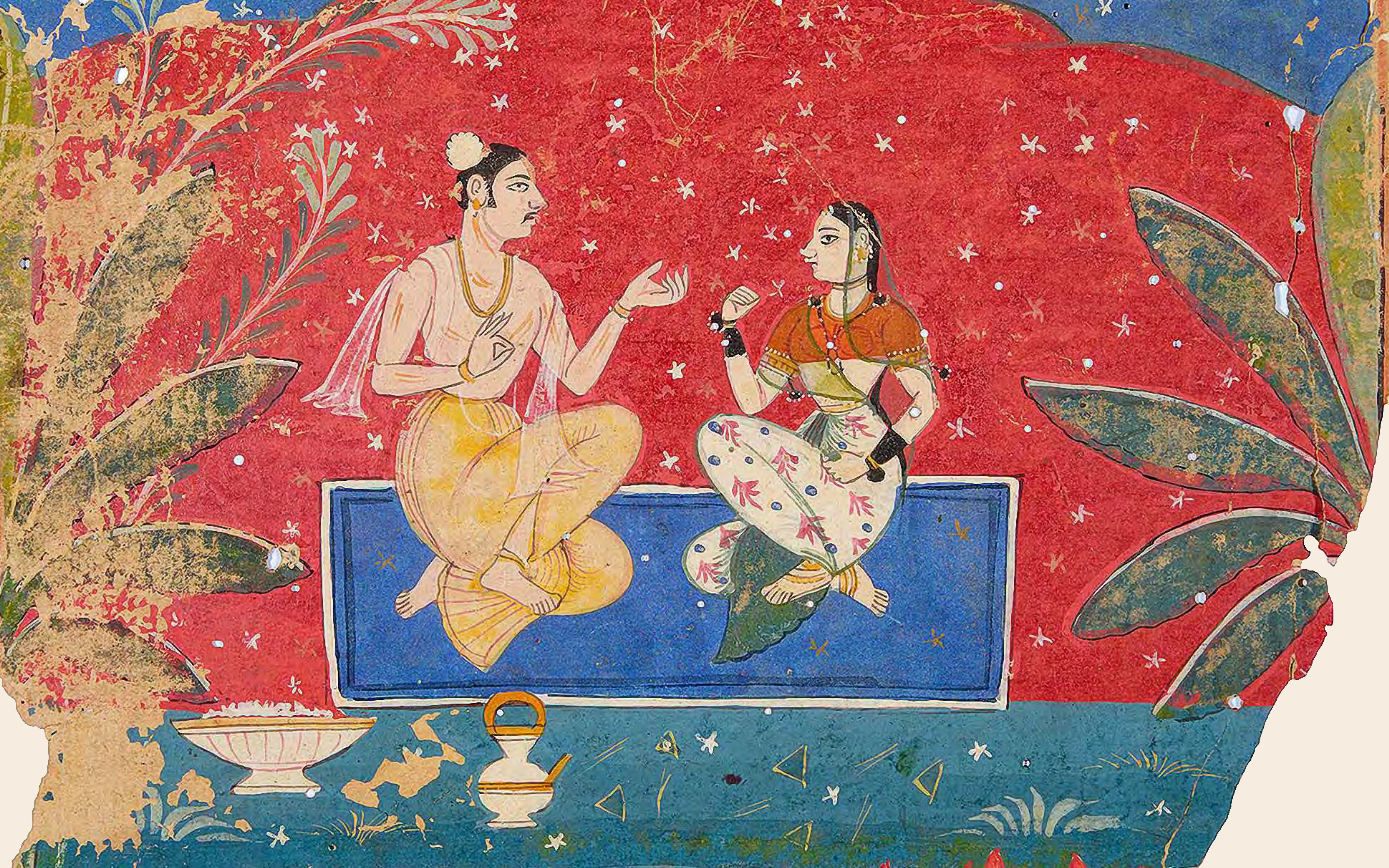
Dr Moti Chandra, Mumbai (1950–1964)

These three paintings (one unillustrated) are fragments from the *Bhagavata Purana* preserved in the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune (No. 61/1907–15), one of the landmarks of Rajasthani painting.<sup>1</sup> The colophon of the unbound manuscript provides the name of the scribe (Jasavanta), the place of production at Udaipur in Mewar, and a date equivalent to August–September 1648 (10 of the month Bhadrapada, V.S. (Vikramasamvat) 1706). Spread over 128 folios, its 129 paintings range in format from full-page to quarter-page, with most (88) in the largest format (21.5 × 39 cm). Two of these paintings (Book VIII, f. 5b; Book IX, f. 24b) bear ascriptions below naming the master painter, Sahibdin; many others can be attributed in whole or in part to him as well, though the total number of illustrations and the relative simplicity of some make it unlikely that he was responsible for every folio.<sup>2</sup> The artist's personal style charted the course for the development of Mewari painting for more than thirty years. His training must have included exposure in the 1620s to a variant of the Popular Mughal style. Under the influence of such models, his works gradually became more spatially complex in composition and more elegant in figural positions, draughtsmanship, and palette, but they are also often distinguished by the artist's innate and sensitive grasp of the poetical flavour of certain texts. Sahibdin is well documented from ascribed works in a dispersed *ragamala* series of 1628, the *Gita Govinda* of 1629, a *Rasikapriya* series of c. 1630–35, two of the seven books of the magisterial Jagat Singh *Ramayana* of 1649–53, and the 1655 *Sukarakshetra Mahatmya*.<sup>3</sup>

Although this *Bhagavata Purana* manuscript is profusely illustrated, it is nonetheless incomplete, with only Books VIII, IX, XI, and XII of the original surviving in Pune. A number of illustrated folios, some complete and others partial, and presumably detached from other books of the text, have found their way into various collections, including in the West the San Diego Museum (Binney Collection), the Brooklyn Museum published in *Realms of Heroism* no 156 and the Benkaim Collection.<sup>4</sup> These two examples, which do not appear on that list, have yet to have their subjects identified precisely, though it may ultimately be possible to do so by correlating the fragments of the text proper and flanking commentary on the reverse, which include verse numbers, with episodes in the *Bhagavata Purana*. They represent familiar encounters in Hindu epics. One scene (cat.15) depicts a sage conversing with a lady beneath an approving gallery of gods, who joyfully strew flowers from their celestial vehicles; both figures have faces and garments executed in a quintessentially Sahibdin style. Another painting (cat.16) from the group reduces the landscape to a starkly plain but vibrant red backdrop, a traditional device that focuses attention on the interaction of the two groups of figures: a king mounted on a chariot furnished with a royal parasol, and Shiva and Parvati, together with some disciples. The deity himself is readily identified by the goddess Ganga flowing from his matted locks and the canonical attribute of a trident in hand.

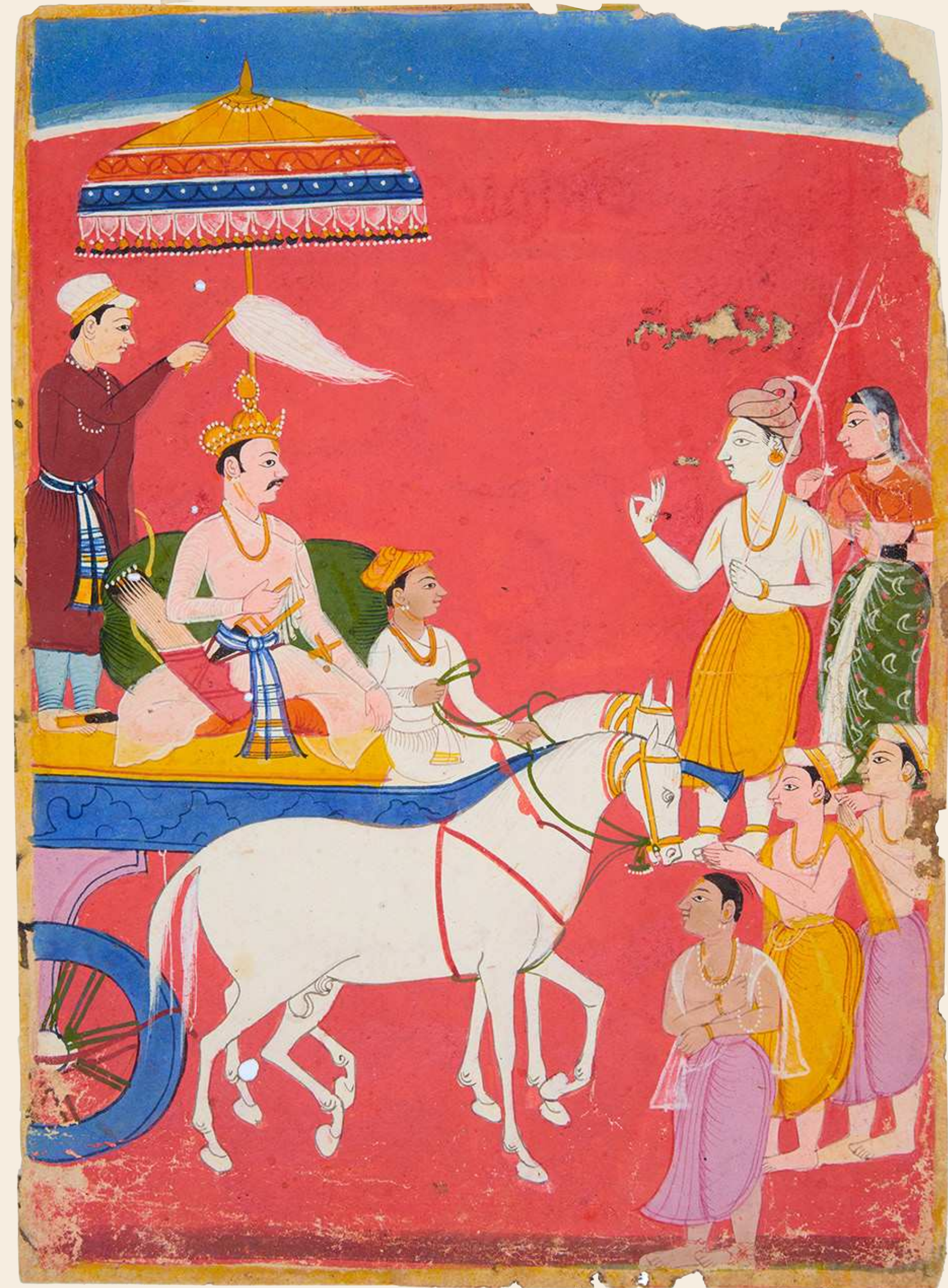








1. The manuscript is presented in full in Tadashi Shimizu, *The Bhagavata-Purana Miniature Paintings from the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute Manuscript Dated 1648* (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for Unesco, 1993). A seminal introduction to the manuscript is Karl Khandalavala, 'Leaves from Rajasthan: A Dated *Bhagavata Purana* of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, and Notes on the Chronology of Early Rajput Painting', *Marg* 4, no. 3 (1950): 2–24, 49–56.
2. The two ascribed paintings are reproduced in Shimizu, *The Bhagavata-Purana Miniature Paintings*, illustrations 3 and 60. A concise account of the manuscript is also given in Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London, 1982), cat.no.90. Losty plausibly suggests that Manohar, another Mewari artist active in the Jagat Singh *Ramayana*, was also active in the *Bhagavata Purana*.
3. These manuscripts and painting series are discussed in Andrew Topsfield, 'Sahibdin', in Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, and B.N. Goswamy, eds., *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100–1900* (Zurich, 2011), vol 1: 391–406; Andrew Topsfield, 'The Saving Power of Soron: Sahibdin of Udaipur and the *Sukarakshetra Mahatmya*', in A. Topsfield, ed., *Court Painting in Rajasthan* (Mumbai, 2000) pp. 26–40; and Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, cat.nos. 91–97.
4. Andrew Topsfield, *Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar* (Zurich, 2002), p. 83, n. 122, lists dispersed examples known at time of his publication. One group of four painting listed in Karl Khandalavala, Moti Chandra, and Pramod Chandra, *Miniature Paintings from the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection* (New Delhi, 1960), cat.nos. 27a–d, are different from the present group of paintings.





### A Meeting of Lovers in the Dark

Folio from a *Rasikapriya* series

Mewar, c.1660

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 29.2 × 22 cm; painting 22.5 × 19.3 cm, within a yellow margin and red border

Inscribed above with a Hindi verse from the *Rasikapriya* of Keshav Das, V.30, and the heading niscaraka . ('going out by night') and on the reverse with a Bikaner inventory note from the 1694 inventory: Am.32 jam ... [damage] su sarnbhaliya ('no. 32 . bundle') and the stamp of the personal collection of the Maharaja of Bikaner

#### Provenance

Collection of Ludwig Habighorst

Private collection, USA

#### Published

Bautze, J. 'Sirohi-Malerei in der Mitte des 17 Jahrhunderts' *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift*:

Dehejia, H.V., *A Festival of Krishna: Under the Kadamba Tree*, Roli Books, 2008, p195

Habighorst, L.V. *Der blaue Gott in indischen Miniaturen*, Mittelrhein Museum, Koblenz, 2014, no. 10

A storm is brewing in the darkening sky above Braj and streaks of lightning flash in the rolling clouds and strike the ground. Raindrops are falling as the cranes rush to take shelter in the trees. The cowherd boys and girls have taken their charges back to the cow-pen in the village and are now guided to their houses by Nanda and another villager. Krishna is there too and his favourite gopi Radha is just in front of him, but they both seize the opportunity to escape and be with each other. We see them again after they have moved to the shelter of a grove where Krishna ardently embraces her, ignoring the falling rain. As is normal in Mewar painting, all the brightly coloured figures and trees are silhouetted against a fairly plain green ground, on which the well-worn paths leading from the cow-pen and indeed through the grove stand out.

The page illustrates *Rasikapriya* V.30, Nisimilan ('meeting in darkness'), from chapter 5 on the subject of how lovers meet:

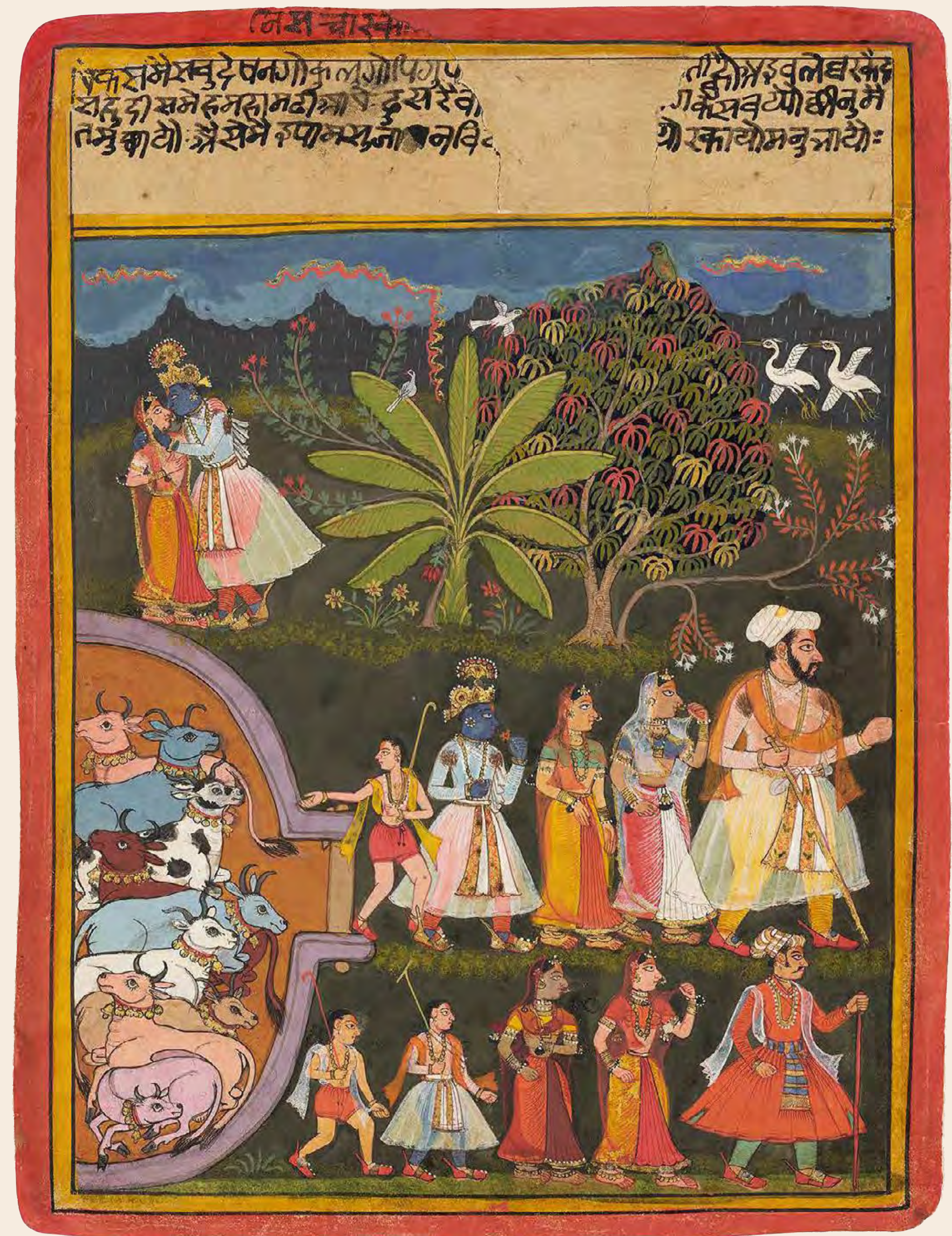
*One day a group of gopis and gopas went to Gokul, and when it was time to return, it became late in the night and everyone hurried to their home.*

*Dark clouds formed in the sky, and it was so dark that one could identify another only by calling their names.*

*Krishna took Radha aside and engaged in love sports with her*  
(translation Harsha Dehejia, 2013, p. 195).

This series of the *Rasikapriya* dates from early in the reign of Rana Raj Singh (r. 1652–80); 54 pages from it were in the former Bikaner royal collection by 1694.<sup>1</sup> Many of the Bikaner pages have large chunks missing from the top where the pile of folios must have been damaged, since replaced with plain local paper, as in our example. The series is largely based on the earlier ones done in the reign of Rana Jagat Singh (r. 1628–52) by Sahib Din (much of one of which was also in the Bikaner collection). Several different hands of various abilities would seem to have been involved in this new series.

An earlier version of our subject by Sahib Din from the 1630–35 set in the Government Museum, Udaipur, shows almost the same composition: the second man and one of the *gopis* have exchanged places, while there is a smaller cow-pen and number of cows, and just the one





boy ends the lower line of figures instead of our two, one behind each line.<sup>2</sup> In the earlier version, although a storm is brewing there is as yet no rain, and Krishna is showing his erotic intentions by putting his hand on Radha's breast rather than embracing. Our painting from the c. 1660 series closely follows the second version attributed to Sahib Din and his workshop from 1640–50 in the Goenka collection, differing only in the trees in the landscape.<sup>3</sup> Both now show two young boys, for behind Krishna there is an additional one who turns round to bid goodnight as it were to the cows.

Many pages from our series are now in the National Museum, New Delhi, the Neotia collection and the Goenka collection (Topsfield;<sup>4</sup> Sharma;<sup>5</sup> Goswamy and Bhatia<sup>6</sup>). Seven pages were formerly in the Khajanchi collection in Bikaner (Khandalavala et al<sup>7</sup>). A page formerly in the Stuart Cary Welch collection was sold at Sothebys London, 12 December 1972, lot 87, while another page was illustrated in the Sam Fogg catalogue.<sup>8</sup>

A Bikaner painting illustrating the same verse also from the Habighorst collection, obviously influenced by its Mewar predecessors already in the royal collection, allows us to compare the different artists' approaches.<sup>9</sup> It is evident that the Bikaner version attributed to Nuruddin is based on the earlier Mewar versions in its composition, but he has chosen to leave out the cow-pen so that the cows are just following the group of cowherds and cowgirls home across a hillside, while it is getting dark, owing to evening falling and not to a storm. Radha and Krishna are placed where they are in the Mewar versions and the artist follows our version in having the couple ardently embrace, rather than Sahib Din's more sedate pair.

J.P.Losty

1. Topsfield, A. *Court Painting at Udaipur – Art under the patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Artibus Asiae, Zurich, 2002, pp. 91–92, and p. 103, no. 41 & 42

2. Desai, V. 'From Illustrations to Icons: the Changing Context of the Rasikapriya Paintings in Mewar' in B.N. Goswamy, ed. *Indian Painting: Essays in Honour of Karl J. Khandalavala*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1995, pp 97–127, fig. 12

3. (Ibid., fig. 14)

4. Topsfield, A. *Court Painting at Udaipur – Art under the patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Artibus Asiae, Zurich, 2002, pp. 90–91, and p. 103, no. 41

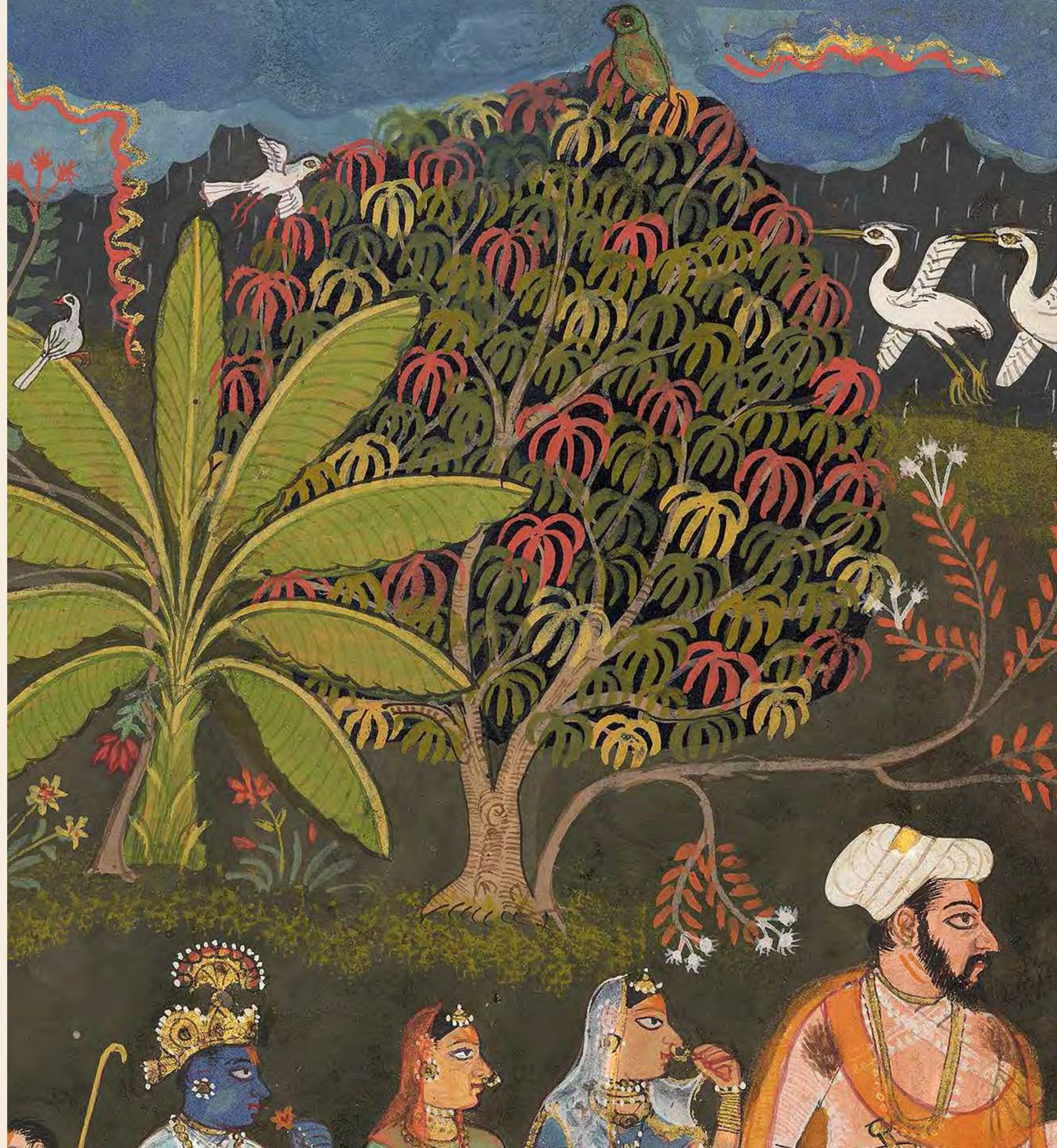
5. Sharma ed. 2006 Sharma, R.C., et al., *Indian Art Treasures: Suresh Neotia Collection*, ed. by R.C. Sharma, Kamal Giri and Anjan Chakraverty, Mosaic Books, New Delhi, 2006, nos. 80–84

6. Goswamy, B.N. and Bhatia, U., *Painted Visions: the Goenka Collection of Indian Paintings*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1999, 1999, nos 102 & 103

7. Khandalavala, K., Chandra, M. and Chandra, P., *Miniature Painting: a Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1960, nos 24a–g, figs 32 & 33

8. Fogg, Sam, *Indian Paintings and Manuscripts*, Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts, London, 1999, cat.41

9. Losty, J.P., *Indian Paintings from the Ludwig Habighorst Collection*, Francesca Galloway, London, 2018, no.41









**Vilaval Ragini**

From the 'Berlin Ragamala' series, nos.3, 14

Attributed to the Hada Master

Kota style, c. 1660

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 30.1 × 23.3 cm; painting 20 × 11.3 cm

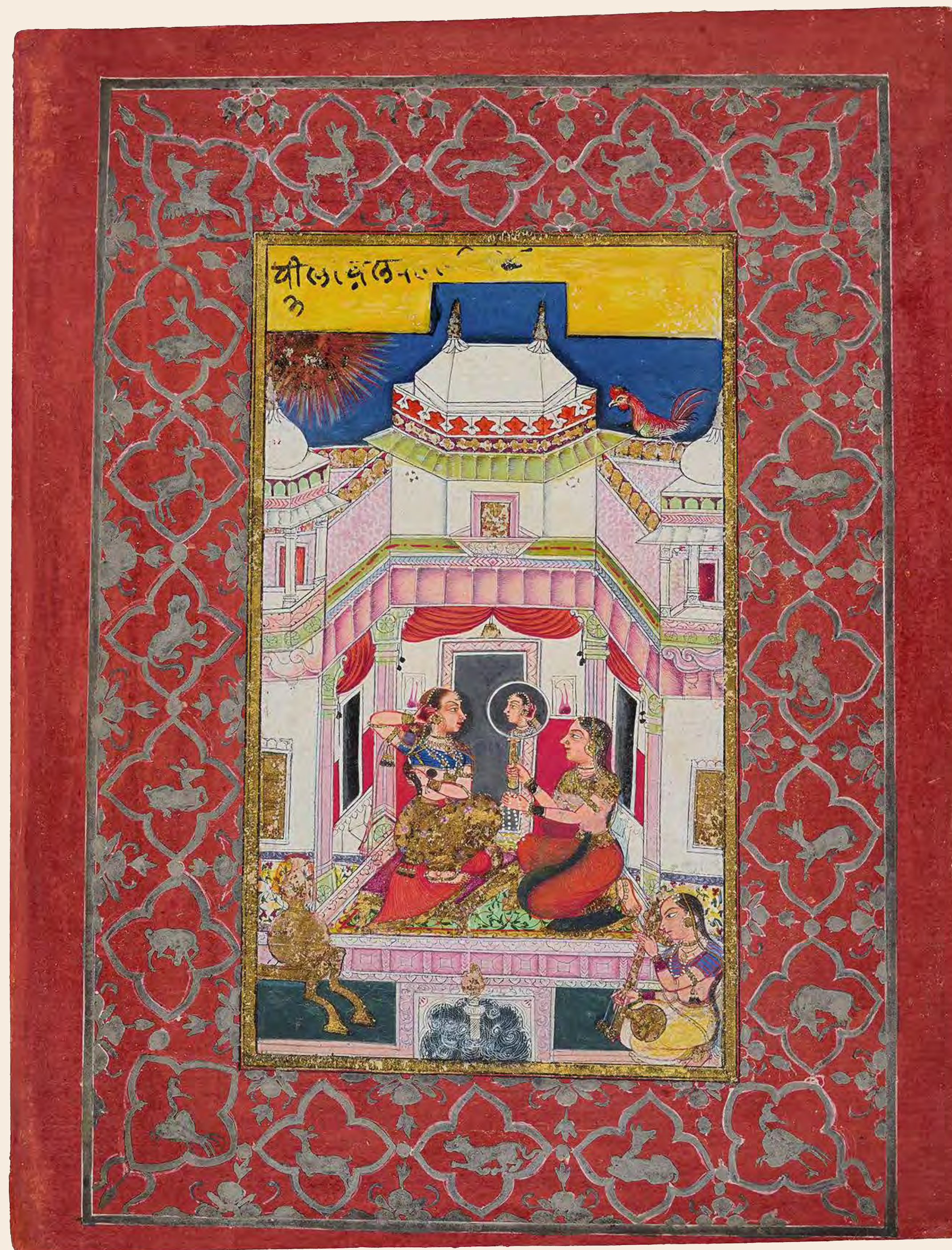
**Provenance**

Collection of Eva and Konrad Seitz

*Vilaval Ragini*, a wife of *Hindola Raga*, has a remarkably constant visual iconography in Rajasthani painting: a *nayika* or lady fussing with her earring – traditionally, one of eight auspicious types of ornament – as she studies her reflection in a mirror held up by her confidante. The two women sit together on a low dais at the centre of a two-storey building with flanking wings and are serenaded by a female musician playing a *vina*. The foreground of the painting is fleshed out with a central fountain and table with a covered water vessel. In both imagery and composition, this work hews closely to the Bundi/Kota *ragamala* iconographic tradition that was established in 1591 in the seminal Chunar *Ragamala* series and continued with only minor deviations through the c. 1760 'Boston' *Ragamala*.<sup>1</sup> The implied purpose of the *nayika*'s ongoing adornment is to ready herself for a tryst with her lover later that day. The melody is to be sung in the morning, a time of day evoked by the rising sun and a rooster on the rooftop.

The painting belongs to a well-known series designated as the 'Berlin *Ragamala*', which derives its nomenclature from the number of its paintings in the Museum für Indische Kunst in Berlin.<sup>2</sup> It is readily recognisable by its wide red borders embellished with a large-scale pattern rendered in silver. Most patterns feature scrolling vines, while this example has a series of quatrefoils framing an individual animal or bird; such borders reflect the Mughal-inspired taste that surfaces throughout early painting at Bundi and Kota. A cursorily written and fragmentary inscription in the yellow panel above the painting proper normally reserved for a caption or accompanying verse provides the name *Vilaval Ragini* and the numeral 3, indicating the *raga*'s position amongst the six families in this *ragamala*; the damaged numeral in the upper centre (probably 14) accordingly indicates the painting number within the sequence of thirty-six paintings in the set.<sup>3</sup>

This *ragamala* series falls late in the career of a master artist designated by Milo Beach as the Hada Master (active c. 1610–50 at Bundi, and c. 1650–60 at Kota), whose name is taken from a branch of the Chauhan Rajputs clan that ruled at both Bundi and Kota.<sup>4</sup> The latter, a region in southern Bundi, became an independent state only in 1631. Like most other paintings in the series, this example displays a conspicuously lavish use of gold. Its forms also tend to be more broadly conceived and richly coloured than those in contemporary Bundi painting, and the faces have a ruddy modelling around the eye and jaw that is absent in Bundi painting. These features are not found in the rendering of the musician below, but that is the result of modern restoration of her eye, jaw, and hair to repair minor surface losses.





1. *Vilaval Ragini* of the Chunar *Ragamala* series is preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, and published in Milo C. Beach, 'The Masters of the Chunar *Ragamala* and the Hada Master', in Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, and B.N. Goswamy, eds., *Masters of Indian Painting, 1100–1900* (Zurich, 2011), vol. 1, p. 295, fig. 3. A corresponding scene from a set assigned to Bundi, c. 1680, is in the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution F1990.10. The *Vilaval Ragini* from the 'Boston' *Ragamala* series (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 67.798) is published in Pratapaditya Pal, *Ragamala Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston, 1967), cat.no.87, pl. XL.
2. For example, *Asavari Ragini* in the Museum für Indische Kunst, ISL I 5697. Four painting in the Mittal Museum are discussed by Milo Beach in John Seyller, ed., *Rajsthani Paintings in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art* (Hyderabad, 2015), cat.nos.39–42. A reconstruction of the series appears in Joachim Bautze, *Lotosmond und Löwenritt* (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 86–94.
3. This interpretation of the two sets of numbers is offered in B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, *Domains of Wonder. Selected Masterworks of Indian Painting* (San Diego, 2005), p. 85.
4. B.N. Goswamy, *Painted Visions: The Goenka Collection of Indian Paintings* (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 160–164, has assigned the series to Bundi in the last quarter of the 17th century, while J.P. Losty, *Rajput Paintings from the Ludwig Habighorst Collection* (London: Francesca Galloway, 2019), cat.no.4, proposes a Bundi provenance and a date of c. 1670.





**Danalila**

Attributed to Mohan  
Raghogarh, c. 1685–90  
Opaque pigments and gold on paper  
Folio 31.4 × 22.2 cm  
Inscribed on reverse (see last paragraph)

**Provenance**

Private Collection, USA  
Prof. Pramod Chandra, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965–2014  
Dr Moti Chandra, Mumbai (1909–1974)

Part of the boundless appeal of Krishna, the divine cowherd, lies in his fondness for mischievous behaviour, which often takes the form of an engaging if teasing manner as a way to express the deeply emotional love between god and devotee. Krishna pulls off pranks even as a child, but makes more sexually freighted ones once he reaches adolescence. The *danalila* ('game of tolls') is the adult version of his flirtatious behaviour. Radha, Krishna's archetypal lover, and other *gopis* (cowmaidens) respond to a king's request for them to bring pots of ghee to a sacrificial site, in part because of his vow that their every wish will be fulfilled if they do. Krishna learns that Radha and her companions are passing close by his abode on Mount Govardhan, and accosts them, playfully demanding a favour or 'toll' before he allows them to pass. In some accounts, Krishna's game becomes a bit intrusive as he grabs at Radha's pot, tugs at her clothing, or removes her jewellery to keep as a kind of collateral. Surprisingly, it sometimes involves pointed banter about her present married state and her married life with Krishna himself in a previous life.

In this charming scene, however, the Krishna's playful predations seem wholly innocuous as the group of *gopis* is reduced to two nearly identical women, each ostensibly moving away from Krishna but unable to resist turning her head to gaze enthralled into his eyes. Each *gopi* balances on her head a pot of milk or ghee – the humble offering intended for the king's sacrifice – and draws her spangled *odhani* (veil) towards her face in a gesture of modesty. As Krishna strides towards Radha, he holds a thin cowherd's crook in one hand and raises the other hand in a gesture of address. Adding to the vibrant contrast of Krishna's blue-skinned body and customary *navratnavidarba* (peacock-feathered crown) and *pitambara* (yellow *dhoti*) are the gleaming white and double-looped *vanamala* (long garland) and thin red *dupatta* (sash), which also increase the visual energy within the composition. The three figures themselves are arrayed in a direct, uncomplicated manner, all spaced at regular intervals in a single register spanning the centre of the composition. The landscape is relatively simple as well, with a broad field of mungo green accentuating the clear silhouettes of the bright figures and setting off the gracefully spreading branches of a sapling. Staggered rows of oversized flowers stake out a foreground laced with low, dark green mounds, and painterly streaks of blue and white dash across the arching sky.

The painting is readily attributed to Mohan, an artist known earlier from a landmark ascribed work dated 1689 that depicts a royal couple watching the crescent moon; it was previously assigned to Bundi by Pramod Chandra, whose family formerly owned the present work, and subsequently anchored the chronology of painting in that Rajasthani state.<sup>1</sup> Recent research, however, has identified Mohan as the brilliant master of the atelier active at Raghogarh, a small state in the Malwa region of Madhya





Pradesh.<sup>2</sup> Mohan apparently left Kota or Bundi, where he had trained, and reached Raghogarh about 1670. His highly original style displays some elements clearly derived from Deccani painting, which had infiltrated several strains of Rajasthani painting in the 1650s and 1660s. His early works feature similar figures with rounded faces and pointed noses, angular gestures, tiny wasp waists, and the flaring double garlands seen here. In later works, especially those after 1685, both figural and landscape forms become more relaxed, and the striking naïve quality of his initial efforts falls away. This charming painting belongs to that later phase.

A casually written four-line inscription on the reverse bears no relation to the original subject, provenance, or artist of the painting. Instead, it states that one Rao Sahib of a thikana (whose name remains illegible) donated this work to a temple near Surajpol. The value of the painting (or possibly a group of eleven paintings) was assessed at seven rupees, four annas.<sup>3</sup>

1. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya. Mumbai 55.89, published in Pramod Chandra, *Bundi Painting* (New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1959), pl. 2; and John Seyller and Jagdish Mittal, *Central Indian Paintings in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art* (Hyderabad, 2019), fig. 6.

2. Seyller and Mittal 2019, pp. 61–72, and cat.nos.23–25.

3. We wish to express our gratitude to Narmada Prasad Upadhyaya for his expertise and diligence in deciphering this inscription.





*Asavari Ragini*Folio from a *Ragamala* series

Kota, c. 1720

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 35.7 × 25.7 cm; painting 20.2 × 11.2 cm

Inscribed above in Devanagari in the yellow panel: 36 *Shri Raga ki ragini*; *Asavari Ragini* (in the upper right); *gav do pahro* (to be sung in the afternoon)

*Provenance*

Collection of Eva and Konrad Seitz

*Asavari Ragini*, a melody to be sung in the afternoon, is almost invariably represented by a tribal woman wearing a peacock-feather lower garment as she consorts with the many serpents in the den that has swarmed the grove, albeit in a surprisingly unmenacing way. In most regional expressions of the Rajasthani tradition, a dark-skinned woman sits alone on a boulder or hillock, playing a flute to tame the creatures. In this case, however, the artist has invigorated this standard imagery in several ways: refining the woman's complexion to a light shade of blue and her bodice to a sheer golden article, wreathing her rocky throne with both a dramatic strip of grass and a lotus-filled stream teeming with fish and fowl, and transforming her musical instrument into a small elephant goad, which she plies benignly above the serpent's head as a patient instructor might. A longer jewelled spear or sceptre with a fleur-de-lis head lies by her feet. This same minor variation occurs in the corresponding illustration in the c. 1650–60 'Berlin *Ragamala*'.<sup>1</sup>

As is the case with several other *ragamala* series of the Bundi/Kota style, this series has elicited divergent scholarly opinions, with some arguing for a Bundi provenance and a date at the end of the 17th century, and others placing it in Kota at a date as late as 1720.<sup>2</sup> Joachim Bautze meticulously lists other folios from the same series, which is distinguished by its flat black ruling and presence of long inscriptions in the upper border.<sup>3</sup> The woman here does have a sharper nose than many others depicted in this series as well as the heavy eyelids characteristic of Kota painting. The colouring is rich, even flamboyant in some passages, especially in the crimson-pink gradations in the inventively faceted rocky throne and outcrop above and the orange-streaked sunrise sky. Luxuriant foliage patterns are animated in wonderfully irregular ways, and the white froth along the shoreline is as dense and palpable as any in Indian painting. Many creatures, from ducks to scorpions to serpents, possess a delightful whimsical quality.

1. Berlin ISL I 5697, published in Ernst and Eleanor Rose Waldschmidt, *Miniatures of Musical Inspiration in the Collection of the Berlin Museum of Indian Art* (Berlin, 1975), fig. 110.

2. Joachim Bautze, *Lotosmond und Löwenritt*, cat.nos.31–32; and Bautze and Amy Poster in Amy G. Poster et al., *Realms of Heroism: Indian Paintings at the Brooklyn Museum* (New York, 1994), cat. no.124, take the former position; Milo C. Beach, in John Seyller, ed., *Rajasthani Paintings in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art*, cat.nos.46–47, subscribes to the latter. Losty, *Rajput Paintings from the Ludwig Habighorst Collection*, p. 30, accommodates both positions, maintaining that artists from both Bundi and Kota worked on the series at different dates.

3. Bautze, *Lotosmond und Löwenritt*, p. 95, n.10. Another folio (*Nata Ragini*, painting no.20) was subsequently offered at Bonhams 18 September 2013, lot 141.













***Madhumadhavi Ragini***

From a *Ragamala* series

Bikaner, c. 1700–10

Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid on an European-style Album page

Folio 39.4 × 26.8 cm; painting 14.4 × 9.8 cm; painting on verso with flowers

21.5 × 13.2 cm

Although there is no inscription above to identify the scene, the imagery of a *nayika* turning to look up in alarm and raise one hand reflexively against the lightning and thunder of a tempestuous sky is so distinctive that this painting must depict *Madhumadhavi Ragini*, one of the wives of *Shri Raga*. As the woman makes her way through the night to a rendezvous with her beloved, the turbulence of nature adds urgency to her pace, whose quickness the artist conveys by showing her with one foot raised as she runs and the other placed on the step at the threshold of her lover's pavilion. In this version, she reaches out to take the hand of a maidservant or confidante waiting at the bed that has been prepared for the tryst.

The painting exhibits many secondary features of the general style of painting practiced at Bikaner about 1700, including the light palette, the modest spatial complexity of an obliquely set building, the discreet shading on the eaves and courtyard wall, and even the easily overlooked subtlety of the greyish stone coursework of the pavilion itself. More particular to this artist are the handsome faces of the two large-scale women, which are distinguished by the shape of their relatively large eyes with a golden iris, the finely painted hair, and the form of the sinuous side curl. The patterns of the *nayika's* skirt and *patka*, the green carpet of the pavilion, and pinkish architrave are all noticeably delicate. One unusual feature is the insistent pearl beading along the golden hems of the women's *odhanis* and skirts, as well as dangling from various tassels and the bed covering. Other noteworthy details are the gold outlining of the cusped archway of the chamber and the nuanced shapes and tonal gradations of the swirling storm clouds.

The painting bears some resemblance to the work of Lupha, a little-known artist whose sole ascribed painting includes a figure of Radha with a face like that of the attendant here.<sup>1</sup> Similar figures also appear in a masterful painting attributed jointly to Lupha and his son Murad.<sup>2</sup> That said, a definitive analysis of Lupha's personal style will depend on additional ascribed examples coming to light.

On the reverse of the folio are four whimsical Bikaner paintings joined together to make a composition that recalls Mughal floral paintings of the mid 17-century. Three of them depict individual specimens of flowering plants, while the uppermost shows a Chinese-style phoenix pursuing a crane across a sky filled with knotted and flaring Chinese-style clouds.

1. Karl J. Khandalavala, Moti Chandra, and Pramod Chandra, *Miniature Paintings from the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection* (New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1960), cat.96, fig. 75.

2. *Vaikuntha Darshan*, Brooklyn Museum of Art 1990.134, published in Amy Poster et al., *Realms of Heroism* (New York, 1994), no.117. Murad is named as the son of Lupha in a painting published in *Divine Pursuits. Indian Painting Traditions from the 15th to 19th Centuries* (Chicago: Leslie Hindman Gallery in association with Sam Fogg, London, 2003), no.34.









**Portrait of Virpur Nar Singh, 14th Rana of Lunawada**

Mewar, c. 1720

Opaque pigments with gold and silver on paper

Folio 52 × 43 cm; painting 46 × 38 cm

Inscribed in Devanagari on the reverse: *Virpuro Nar Singhji ri sabi ro pano lunavada balai;*

Mewar inventory no. (written in red) 16/124, valuation 5 [rupees]

*Provenance*

Private Collection, France

This image of a ruler seated between attendants, a hookah mouthpiece raised to his lips, is one of the most standard portrait types in Indian painting, with one iteration distinguished from another primarily by the subject's facial features, body, and clothing. In this case, the fair-skinned young ruler, who seems to be in his late twenties, sports a long drooping moustache and side whiskers embellished with a fashionable double curl. He presents as a rather portly figure, a quality evident in his chin fat, hefty torso, and slightly swollen hands. The sheer bulk of his body, however, is lightened by a flowing, diaphanous white garment that softens considerably the turmeric paste-enhanced portion of his torso and arms, the natural skin tone of his abdomen and arms, and what would have been an assertive and form-defining pink-and-green striped *paijama*. It has a similar harmonising effect on the immediate setting, flaring out ornamentally over part of the mustard-yellow floor cloth, where four tiny golden vessels have been discreetly arrayed. The painting's ethereal quality is extended further in the delicate pink bolster, white terrace, and pale green background. Conversely, the upright red cushion, the orange turban and hand cloth, the inlaid globular hookah and its hexagonal stand, and the series of polylobed plantings in the foreground garden supply a few judicious dashes of strong colour.

The identity of the principal figure of this particular royal party is revealed by an inscription on the reverse that names him as Virpur Nar Singh of Lunawada (or Lunawara), a small princely state located in northeast Gujarat that was periodically allied with nearby Virpur.<sup>1</sup> The capital, Lunawada, was founded in 1434. Nar Singh (r. 1711–35) was the 14 rana of Lunawada, and had three sons, two of whom in all likelihood are depicted as the attendants here.

Only one other painting associated explicitly with Lunawada or its rulers is known. Andrew Topsfield has observed that this painting seems to be the work of an anonymous artist from Udaipur,<sup>2</sup> a connection bolstered by its obvious kinship with a contemporary Mewari painting of Bahadur Shah I with his sons in the rendering of the faces and the formulaic draughtsmanship of the figures' blockish hands and feet.<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of a Mewari inventory number and valuation indicates that the work was recorded at Mewar, which suggests in turn that it was probably made there, perhaps on the occasion of a state visit.

1. A bust-length portrait of the same figure is inscribed Raja Rai Singh, whom Andrew Topsfield takes to be the Sisodia figure who took possession of Toda in Jaipur state in the mid 17th century. The painting, now in the National Gallery of Victoria, is published in Andrew Topsfield, *Paintings from Rajasthan in the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1980), no.41.

2. Personal communication with Francesca Galloway.

3. Christie's 2018 live auction, lot 137.









**Tiger Hunt**

Udaipur, c. 1740–1750

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 40 × 51 cm; painting 32 × 42.6 cm

Inscription on top red border reads: Raja Shri Prathiraj Chahuvan

*Provenance*

Collection of Zarrina and Antony Kurtz

Private collection, Germany, prior to 2006

*Published*

*Treasures from India*, Francesca Galloway, London, 2006, cat. 33

Unusually for a Mewar hunting scene, this painting does not portray a contemporary prince, but rather a semi-historical figure. An inscription in the border above the painting identifies the subject as Prithviraj Chauhan, the Rajput ruler of Ajmer and Delhi who was defeated by the invading Ghurid armies under Mahmud Ghuri in 1192. In the centuries after his death, Prithviraj became a symbol of Rajput resistance to Mughal power, and the subject of a huge verse epic, the *Prithviraj Raso*. The original *Prithviraj Raso* was said to have been composed by Prithviraj's court poet, Chand Bardai, though the bulk of the work is probably the accumulated result of centuries of oral tradition. The work acquired great popularity in Rajasthan, where illustrated copies were also made, including one attributed to Udaipur c. 1690.<sup>1</sup>

In this painting Prithviraj is seen on the top of a hill aiming at a tiger, while a second tiger is thrown back by the force of an arrow that has pierced its belly. In the background an army is seen assembled around an empty throne, presumably that of Prithviraj himself. The painting may have served a didactic purpose as a warning for rulers to be on the alert. Having once defeated the Ghurid army, Prithviraj was eventually defeated and captured by the enemy thanks to a cunning ruse which caught him unprepared.

J.P. Losty

1. Topsfield, A., *Court Painting at Udaipur – Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Zurich, Artibus Asiae, 2002, pp. 95–6









### Three Preparatory Drawings from the 'Second Guler' *Gita Govinda*

These three drawings are preparatory studies for illustrations to a *Gita Govinda* series that is by any measure one of the highpoints of Indian painting. Composed in the late 12th century by the eastern Indian poet Jayadeva and organised into twelve cantos or chapters, the *Gita Govinda* ('Song of the Herdsman') evokes the joys and tribulations of the all-consuming love of Krishna and Radha, a *gopi* or village maiden. There is a minimal sense of narrative development throughout the text, which instead takes the form of discrete introspective musings by Krishna and Radha in turn on their feelings at various moments of the romance as well as some rapturous expressions the two lovers direct towards one other. But it is probably the frankly erotic descriptions of their physical lovemaking that have made performances of the songs of the *Gita Govinda* seem particularly suitable for the grand occasions of royal marriages. It follows logically that an illustrated series of *Gita Govinda* would make a particularly appropriate wedding gift.

The dispersed series of paintings is known in academic circles as the 'Second Guler' or 'Tehri-Garhwal' *Gita Govinda*, the former appellation acknowledging the prior *Gita Govinda* series done in Guler in 1730, the latter its ownership by the royal family of Tehri-Garhwal, a state in the Punjab Hills. The series is estimated to number 151 paintings, a calculation based on that numeral appearing on what is ostensibly the last work in the series; of that original total, approximately 140 paintings have survived. The series has long been thought to date to c. 1775 or even as late as 1780, in part because of an assumed connection to the marriage of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra in 1781, but J.P. Losty has recently advanced a persuasive argument for the slightly earlier date of c. 1765–70 to account for the clear contributions of the great Guler master painter Nainsukh (c. 1710–78) to the preparatory drawings, such as those that follow here.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that Nainsukh's personal handiwork is manifest in the designs of these evocative visualisations of the verses, and scholars generally agree that several members of his immediate family – one or more of his own four sons, or the two sons of his elder brother, Manaku, collectively known as the 'First Generation after Nainsukh and Manaku' – were responsible for the paintings that followed in the 1770s.

To understand the preparatory drawings that follow, it is useful to review descriptions of the technical process that generated them. An initial underdrawing was made with a thick brush in reddish sanguine. Thereafter, a thin layer of white or pale yellow paint was applied to key parts of the composition, its purpose being to cover up the preliminary drawing in sanguine and to furnish a smoother surface for the fine line drawing that supplanted it. That line drawing typically follows the composition closely but not always exactly, as is seen in the following entries.<sup>2</sup> Nuances of the style of the drawings of this second phase suggest they are exclusively the work of Nainsukh's sons, nephews, and conceivably even grandsons.

1. J.P. Losty, *Mystical Realm of Love. Pahari Paintings from the Eva and Konrad Seitz Collection* (London: Francesca Galloway, 2017), p. 136. Notes there list most publications that reproduce paintings from the series. The catalogue itself includes three *Gita Govinda* paintings and fifteen drawings (nos. 25–27, 28–43).

2. See Losty 2017, pp. 146–163, for an excellent description of this process and the drawings formerly in the Seitz collection.





### Radha Is Agitated by Her Phantasmic Vision of Krishna Making Love to Another

Preparatory drawing from the 'Second Guler' *Gita Govinda*

Attributed in part to Nainsukh and a master of the First Generation after Nainsukh and Manaku Guler, c. 1765–70

Brush drawing on uncoloured paper, Folio 19.3 × 28 cm

Drawing numbered 96 above and on the reverse at top (and 92 below)

#### Provenance

In a UK collection since the early 1980s

This preparatory drawing of Canto VII, verse 22 of the 15 Song corresponds to a finished painting whose present location is unknown.<sup>1</sup> The three-and-a-quarter lines of Sanskrit text written in Devanagari script on the reverse (and presumably the Pahari paraphrase below them) are translated as follows:

*Her rapt face shows the passion her lips feel kissing him;  
With deer musk he draws the form of a stag on the moon.  
In woods behind a sandbank on the Jumna river,  
Mura's foe makes love in triumph now.<sup>2</sup>*

Both drawing and painting depict Krishna kissing his spectral paramour as they make love in a secluded spot amid the trees on the banks of the Yamuna. At a remove in the upper left intended to be well beyond the eyesight and earshot of Krishna is a disconsolate Radha commiserating with her confidante after Radha has been reproaching herself for somehow bringing on Krishna's purported inconstancy.<sup>3</sup>

There are subtle differences between this revised preparatory visualisation and the final painted version. Here, Krishna plants a kiss directly on the lips of his imaginary paramour, but in the painting, the kiss is redirected to her cheek. The *gopi*, for her part, shifts the position of her left arm, which here is bent to rest on her naked thigh, but later becomes fully outstretched to the ground behind her to brace herself. The artist also imparts a curious sense of detachment to her facial expression, a nod, perhaps, to the notion that is someone other than Krishna's true beloved, Radha. The placement of the surrounding trees has been altered as well so that the rightmost tree that partially obscures the willing *gopi* here is removed altogether in the finished painting. Nonetheless, it is possible to peer through the strong and dark black lines of the second phase of this drawing to discern vestiges of the original sanguine drawing, and thus realise that the completed painting actually reprises the woman's position in the original sketch. Similar changes have been visited upon Radha and her companion. Sustained scrutiny again reveals the pair of figures has been shifted to the right in the second phase of the drawing, with the original sanguine rendering of the figure seated with one leg pendant now lying mostly outside the rectangular ruling of the composition and almost completely covered up with corrective paint. The lovers' bed of leaves, the protruding banks on both sides of the river, and the rhythmic series of arching hills and grove of trees remain virtually the same.

1. Sotheby's, New York, 28 October 1991, lot 62.

2. Barbara Stoler Miller, ed. and trans., *Love Song of the Dark Lord. Jayadeva's Gitagovinda* (New York: Columbia University Press, rev. edition 1997), p.101. The phrase 'Mura's foe' is one of Krishna's many epithets. Mura was the demon commander of the army of the demon Narakasura; both were killed by Krishna, who is also known as Murari ('the killer of Mura').

3. This same device of the simultaneous presentation of fact and fiction is used in the drawings numbered 97 and 99, which are published in Losty 2017, cat.nos.37–38.





**Radha Enters the Bower of Krishna**

Preparatory drawing from the 'Second Guler' *Gita Govinda*

Attributed in part to Nainsukh and a master of the First Generation after Nainsukh and Manaku

Guler, c. 1765–70

Brush drawing on uncoloured paper. Folio 19.3 × 28.2 cm

Drawing numbered 121 above and on the reverse at top (and 117 below)

*Provenance*

In a UK collection since the early 1980s

The four lines from Canto XI of Jayadeva's Sanskrit text on the reverse have been translated in this way:

*Her restless eyes were on Govinda  
With mixed alarm and bliss  
As she entered his place  
To the sweet sound of ringing anklets.*

*All his deep-locked emotions broke when he saw Radha's face,  
Like sea waves cresting when the full moon appears.  
She saw her passion reach the soul of Hari's mood—  
The weight of joy strained his face; Love's ghost haunted him.*

It is somewhat reassuring to the viewer that things are as they seem in this drawing and its corresponding painting, which was first published in 1963 by Randhawa as pl. XIII and whose present location is unknown. Radha's lingering misgivings about Krishna have been assuaged at last, and she exhorts herself to hasten to her beloved under cover of night and consummate their passion for one another. Govinda (Krishna), who is no less inflamed by ardour, expectantly awaits Radha in his bower. Strengthened visually by a bracketing pair of tall trees, an elongated Radha occupies the centre of the composition, and joins her hands together in veneration of the seated Hari (Krishna), who looks up from his bed of leaves. It is telling that neither drawing nor painting depicts the jangling anklets mentioned in the accompanying verse. Little of the original sanguine underdrawing survives, but one can still detect the form of Krishna's right arm and hand that once rested on his leg and knee, but was later shifted to support his knee from below. The river flows emphatically horizontally in the finished composition, but this element is hardly spelled out explicitly in the drawing, which concentrates as usual on the interaction and spacing between the two lovers and allocates lesser elements to the discretion of other members of the workshop.

1. Miller 1997, p. 120, verses 23–24. Much different wording is used in Randhawa 1963, p. 98.
2. The painting, formerly in the collection of Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck, was sold at Sotheby's, New York, 22 March 2002, lot 53.





**At Radha's Direction, Krishna Tenderly Applies Kohl to Her Eyes**

Preparatory drawing from the 'Second Guler' *Gita Govinda*

Attributed in part to Nainsukh and a master of the First Generation after Nainsukh and Manaku

Guler, c. 1765–70

Brush drawing on uncoloured paper

Folio 19.4 × 28.4 cm

Folio numbered 140 above and on the reverse at top (and no.136 below)

*Provenance*

In a UK collection since the early 1980s

This drawing, which is numbered 140, illustrates Canto XII, verse 13 and falls near the end of this *Gita Govinda* series. The single line of Sanskrit text on the reverse has been translated in this way:

*Lover, draw kohl glossier than a swarm of black bees on my eyes  
Your lips kissed away the lampblack bow that shoots arrows of Love.  
She told the joyful Yadu hero, playing to delight her heart.<sup>1</sup>*

The corresponding illustration in the fully painted series is preserved in the Musée Guimet, Paris.

The scene occurs as an enraptured Krishna and an infatuated Radha take turns directing each other to ravish them in quite particular ways. In the preceding illustration, for example, Radha invites Krishna to paint a leaf design on her breast.<sup>2</sup> Here, she tells him to apply kohl, a black powder used widely as eyeliner, to her eyes, teasingly remarking that he had already kissed away the sensuous, undulating black lines that had earlier empowered her eyes to launch dazzling amorous glances. The drawing visualises this tender gesture quite literally, with Krishna drawing back her *odhani* (veil) with one hand and dexterously holding a thin stick between his right thumb and index finger to apply kohl to Radha's left eyelid. The specificity of that gesture is lost in the painted version, which omits the kohl applicator altogether, thus leaving Krishna merely cradling Radha's cheeks in his two hands. The flanking trees both slope to the right, thereby echoing the angle of Krishna's back as he leans forward to fuss over Radha. The later artist has also emended the form of Krishna's crown, forgoing his canonical one topped by peacock-feathers in favour of one with a more ordinary series of prongs.

1. Miller 1997, p. 124. The Yadu (pl. Yadavas) are one of five Aryan clans mentioned in the *Rig Vedas*. Krishna is a descendant of the son of Yadu.

2. The painting is reproduced in Sotheby's 29 April 1992, lot 26.





### A Lady on a Moonlit Terrace Pines for Her Absent Lover

Attributed to Fattu

Guler, c. 1775

Opaque pigments and gold on paper

Folio 22.9 × 15.9 cm; painting 22.5 × 14.9 cm

#### Provenance

Private collection, Switzerland, late 1960s –2013

#### Published

Losty, JP, *Indian Painting 1580–1850* (London: Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, 2013), no 21

In a mundane world a lover's absence might be met with only disappointment or stoic resignation, but in the one described by Indian poetry the situation rarely fails to arouse the most heartfelt pangs of longing and loneliness, so much so that this sentiment dominates the literature of *Ashta-Nayika* (eight heroines). In this case, the category to which this *nayika* (heroine) belongs is not specified by an accompanying inscription. The imagery, however, perfectly conveys the sense of yearning that afflicts *Virahotkanthita nayika*, or one who pines for her lover detained on business.<sup>1</sup> Here, the heroine undertakes a disquieted vigil on a well-appointed bed brought out to the marble terrace of an elegant but shuttered house, where she is joined by three maidservants. One cradles her head as she dozes off during the household wait, whilst the other two sit alertly on either side of the bed. One holds a tiny cup of wine at the ready, the other settles in by leaning back and resting her clasped hands on her knees. Before the latter is a low table that displays two bottles of wine and a second, unused cup, the latter presumably for the paramour expected imminently. A squat five-pronged lamp in the lower left further signals the late hour. Both attendants sympathetically follow the lead of their lovesick mistress in gazing skyward towards a full moon, though only the *nayika* puts her hands together in a gesture of apparent veneration. Yet the moon is no object of outright worship here, but the receptacle of the *nayika's* intense emotions, perhaps even symbolically transmitting like a celestial satellite her words and thoughts to her distant lover.

The artist infuses the scene with an open, spacious quality appropriate to thoughts of a far-off lover. He does so primarily by concentrating the figures and brightly coloured elements in a relatively small area on the right of the composition, and secondarily by articulating in only the most delicate manner the expanse of white in the terrace, balustrade, and pavilion. The faintly streaked stretch of silvery water beyond the pavilion also contributes to the painting's incipient sense of atmospheric perspective. Nonetheless, it is practically certain that circumstances caused minor parts of the work to remain unfinished and thus less emphatically defined. A night sky, for example, would normally have the tonal range of its gradations darkened considerably, and the central segment of the row of trees along the horizon would not be left in such an unresolved state. Most of all, paintings that are entirely complete invariably have a conventional ruling and border, features absent here.

Both the sophisticated equilibrium of the composition and the elegant detailing of the figures' faces and dress are characteristic of the family workshop of Manaku and Nainsukh in the Punjab Hills state of Guler after 1750. The heavier eyelids and jaws of the three women in profile carry through Manaku's personal tendencies into the





figure types of the next generation, and are particularly consistent with the work of his elder son, Fattu (c. 1725–c. 1785), though they are softer than his works in the dispersed c. 1765 *Bhagavata Purana*. So, too, are the opaque treatment of the blue skirt and yellow shawl of the seated maidservant, as well as the orange *odhani* of the *nayika* herself.<sup>2</sup>

1. One similar contemporary scene made in Jaipur and published on the web is labelled as the month of Chaitra, the first month of the Hindu calendar (March–April), a time when husbands often undertake travel on business.
2. For this artist's style, see John Seyller and Jagdish Mittal, *Pahari Paintings in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art* (Hyderabad, 2014), cat.72; B.N. Goswamy and Eberhard Fischer, 'The First Generation after Manaku and Nainsukh of Guler', in Beach, Fischer, and Goswamy, eds., 2011, vol. 2, figs. 2–3; B.N. Goswamy and Eberhard Fischer, *Pahari Paintings. The Horst Metzger Collection in the Museum Rietberg* (Zurich, 2017), cat.22; and Jutta Jain-Neubauer, 'Fattu: A Rediscovery', in Vishwa Chander Ohri and Roy C. Craven, eds., *Painters of the Pahari Schools* (Mumbai, 1998), pp. 81–97.





*A Disheartened Beloved*

Attributed to Muhammadi  
Mandi, c. 1840  
Opaque pigments and gold on paper  
Folio 29.5 × 20.1 cm; painting 20 × 14 cm

As the hours pass after the time of the appointed rendezvous, and her lover has still failed to appear, the *nayika's* longing and anticipation gradually darken into despondency. Overwhelmed by these feelings, the heroine steadies herself physically by stepping up to a plantain tree in a formal garden and woefully casting one arm around it, finding some solace in the tree as a kind of emotional stand-in. Meanwhile, she broodingly gazes downward, raises one hand to her chin, crosses one leg across her body, and slips off one shoe, leaving her foot to balance precariously on a toe or two. All these discreet gestures are used routinely to express a state of consternation under similar circumstances, but the verses of the 19th-century Hindi poet Gval inscribed above a slightly earlier version of the scene describe explicitly the state of mind of *utkanthita nayika* ('the one who waits impatiently'):

*It is evening and still the lover has not come. Dressed in a gold-edged sari, frantic with worry, the girl has descended from her balcony. Says Gval: 'I cannot understand such long delay. She stands clasping the plaintain tree. Her face is full of care.'*<sup>1</sup>

This painting's core imagery of a lady clutching a plantain closely resembles those of two earlier versions assigned to followers of the artist Sajnu (active c. 1790–1830) working at various centres in the Punjab Hills.<sup>2</sup> Yet it also differs in a number of minor compositional ways, from the rhythm created by the oval format of the painting proper, to the presence of secondary and tertiary plantain trees, to the more extensive floral beds in the garden, and finally to the omission of palace buildings beyond the garden wall. The *nayika* diverges from her counterparts as well, being endowed now with exceedingly attenuated forearms and narrow hands, along with an opaque and speckled pink *peshwaz* (robe) she wears in place of her previously diaphanous white one. The more strongly coloured plantain tree, too, has become more naturalistic and bountiful, with the curling inflorescence, purple male buds, and bunches of fruit mitigating some of its previous austerity. The yellowed and split leaf at the top is a further naturalistic touch.

The painting is clearly indebted to the workshop style of the prolific artist Sajnu, who painted at Guler or Kangra before shifting to Mandi, but can be attributed specifically to Muhammadi (alternatively, Mohammadi) a Muslim painter in Sajnu's workshop.

Muhammadi's oeuvre is anchored by several ascribed and dated works. Among these are *Radha Watches a Storm*, ascribed to Muhammadi and dated year 30/1854 C.E.,<sup>3</sup> and *A Lady on a Terrace*, ascribed to Muhammadi and dated year 31/1855 C.E.<sup>4</sup> An earlier phase of Muhammadi's work, that is, c. 1808–25, is represented by paintings in the Government Museum, Chandigarh, and San Diego.<sup>5</sup> The painting, which probably is part of a series of the *Ashta Nayikas* of c. 1840, has flamboyant, three-dimensional flowers in the corners outside the oval frame and a rich black border with scrolling vegetation in gold and blossoms in white.<sup>6</sup>





1. Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) IS.12-1956, published in W.G. Archer, *Indian Painting from the Punjab Hills*, 2 vols. (London, 1973), vol. 1, p. 165, Mandi, no.55, and vol. II, p. 278.
2. See n.1 above and V&A IS.27-1949, published in Archer 1973, vol. 1, p.165, Guler, no.67, and vol. II, p. 118.
3. Bonhams, 19 March 2018, lot 3106.
4. Rob Dean Art, 2023.
5. B.N. Goswamy and Eberhard Fischer, *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India* (Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1992), no.154, pp. 356-357; and San Diego Museum of Art 1990.1139, published in B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, *Domains of Wonder. Selected Masterworks of Indian Painting* (San Diego, CA: San Diego Museum of Art, 2005), no.108.
6. See *Vasakasajja Nayika*, c. 1840, V&A IS.125-1960, published in Archer 1973, vol. I, p. 367, Mandi, no.73, and vol. II, p. 281.

