EXPRESSIONS OF INDIA

FROM THE RONALD M AND CATHERINE H BERNDT COLLECTION

The University of Western Australia | Berndt Museum of Anthropology
Occasional Paper No. 17

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Cover: *Rama and Lakshmana Battle Ravana* (detail), 19th century.
Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. Opaque watercolour on paper, 28.4 x 20.2 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection
[1994/0868]

Berndt Museum of Anthropology - University of Western Australia, holds one of Australia's finest and most important collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material and knowledge, manifesting in art, objects, archives, film, sound and photographs.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Berndt Museum of Anthropology would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people on whose traditional lands we meet and work on, we acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and unique role in the life of the region, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We would like to thank everybody who supported us in producing this publication. Firstly, thank you to Dr. Vanessa Russ and Sarah Ridhuan for planting the seed of this project. We are fortunate to work in an incredible team here at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology and are grateful for the continued support of Isobel Wise and Natalie Hewlett for their assistance. We would also like to acknowledge the staff at the Cultural Precinct for their ongoing support, particularly Clare Mcfarlane in producing this publication.

This publication would not have been possible without the guidance of Professor Krishna Sen from the School of Social Sciences here at UWA and we are incredibly grateful for her assistance.

Lord Shiva Holding the Tanpura on his Lap (detail), 1880-1890. Kolkata, India. Watercolour and tin on paper, 43 x 28.4 cm. Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0029]

FOREWORD

by Professor Krishna Sen

The University of Western Australia once boasted a formidable team of scholars working on the Indian subcontinent. Changes in university priorities here and across Australia has seen much of that expertise disappear from these shores. But material evidence of that engagement remains: amongst them the paintings collected by Ronald and Catherine Berndt, arguably two of Australia's most significant anthropologists.

The Berndts' prodigious academic oeuvre and the collection they left to the university are world renowned as the treasure trove of Australian Aboriginal Art. But Ronald and Catherine also collected artefacts from all around Asia. Biographical essays on Ronald Berndt note that he was an inveterate collector and even as an adolescent visited antique shops in search of Asian collectables.

In 1965 the Berndts travelled in Eastern India and as always in their travels, they immersed themselves in local cultural practices and traditions, including Bengali Kalighat painting, which is showcased in this exhibition. The genre, part centuries old folk art and part tourist kitsch, takes its name from the site where the style flourished - Kalighat, an old Hindu temple.

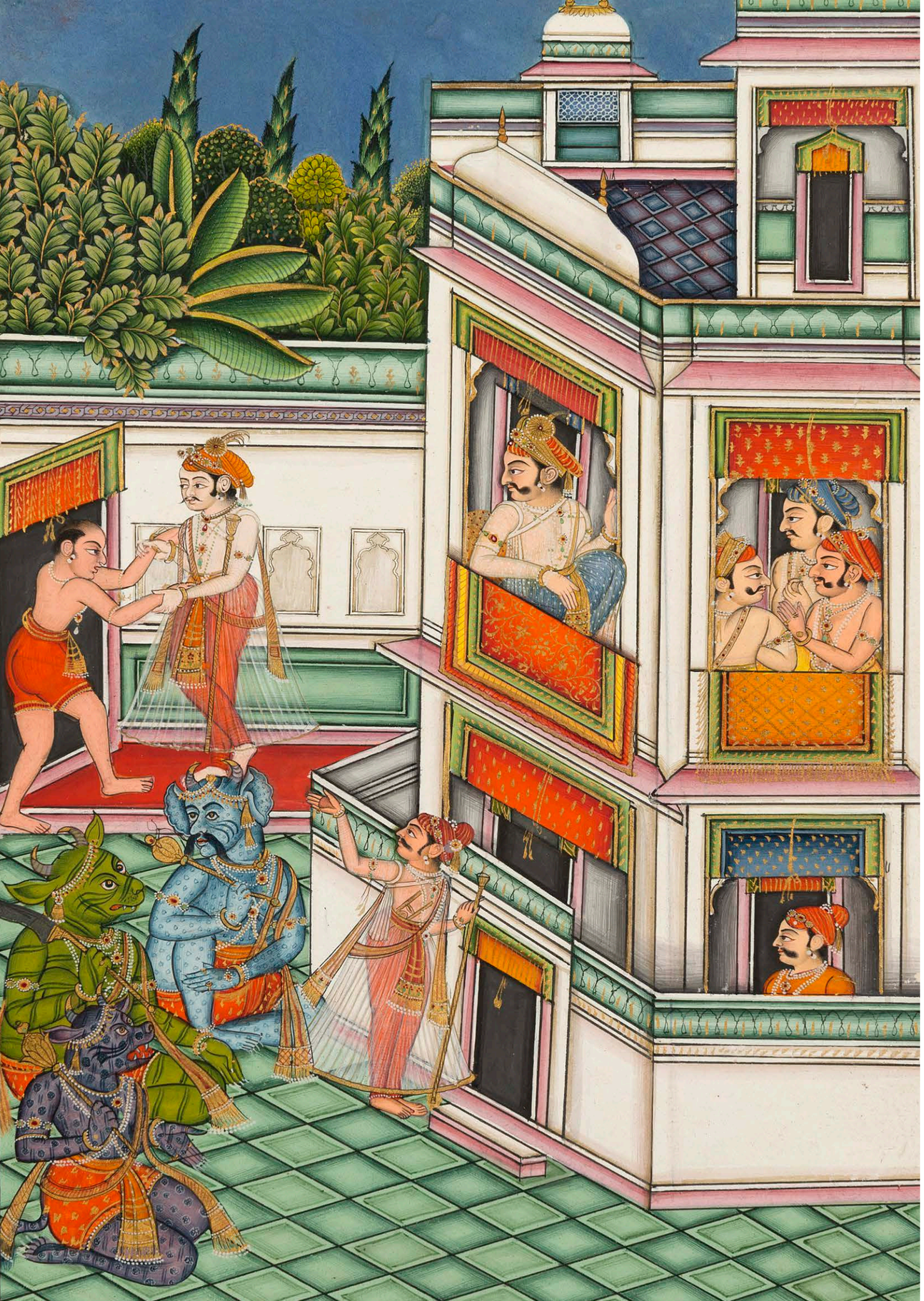
Personally, it was a privilege to be invited to help explore/explain these paintings as the Berndt Museum planned to exhibit a small part of the Berndt's Indian collection. I grew up in Kolkata in the 1960s and '70s amongst a middle-class professional community, which took pride in being 'modern,' Anglophone, and secular. I never once visited the Kalighat temple, which drew pilgrims from all around India. Nor did I know about Kalighat Paintings, though I spent my childhood in a house whose walls were covered in artworks, including prints of European Impressionist works, a mural by one of the father-figures of modern Indian art and even Chinese calligraphy, which were rare at that time in Indian households.

In the underbelly of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, I was introduced to a world of art that was flourishing, just 10 miles or so from the neighbourhood where I grew up. There was an immediate sense of recognition - I knew the mythological characters in the paintings, their drama and their emotions seemed familiar, even at first sight. These are not great works of individual genius. They are works of nameless, often poor, artisans who were not recognised as artists by national or regional elites.

The exhibition covers more than the Kalighat paintings. But these are for me the most evocative of my own growing: the stories, the silences, and the contradictions of growing up in a city that was a cultural melting pot, where everything, including art, was refracted through one's family's social position.

I hope that every visitor to this exhibition will find their own way to connect with the works in this collection - works bred in courts, temples and markets of colonial and post-colonial India - and take pleasure in finding the kindred or the alien or both.

Jagannath with Durga Slaying a Demon (detail), mid-20th Century. Odisha, India. Opaque watercolour and unknown surface coating on cloth, 25.3 x 31 cm. Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0830]



INTRODUCTION

Expressions of India brings together a small collection of Indian paintings from the Ronald and Catherine Berndt Bequest Collection. The featured paintings belong to an extensive collection of over 950 examples of cultural material from across Asia, assembled by the Berndt's throughout their career as internationally renowned anthropologists. Lovingly cared for and displayed in their sprawling Peppermint Grove residence, this collection was essentially hidden from the outside world until bequeathed to the Berndt Museum following Catherine's passing in 1994.[1] Comparative to their collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material, which dominated much of their life's research, the Berndt's collection of Asian cultural material served as both vivid expressions of social relations and as a means of elucidating complex cultural mythologies.

The Berndt's had a long-standing interest in India, grounded in their study of religion and its interaction with social anthropology. Generous funding from the Indian Grants Commission made it possible for Ronald and Catherine to travel extensively throughout India in 1965, where they visited university departments of anthropology and sociology across the country, as well as some of the temples and sites depicted in this exhibition.[2]

Fully comprehending and acknowledging the significance of our place within the Indian Ocean Rim, Ronald and Catherine sought to champion cross-institutional engagement through teaching and research in the field of anthropology and sociology between Australia and its neighbour nations, envisaging equal dedication to the study and celebration of Asian culture within Australian universities.[3]

Expressions of India investigates three distinct groups of paintings from the Bequest Collection. The first, 'Court' paintings, is a style of painting cultivated within the Rajput palace courts of the north-western province of Rajasthan. These intricate paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth century reflect a long history of shifting cultural and political influences.[4:5] The second group is a collection of Kalighat paintings from late nineteenth century Kolkata, in the north-eastern province of Bengal. The then lively capital of British India, bustling with pilgrims, merchants and tourists, Kolkata provided an endless source of interest in these economical and lightweight paintings on paper.[6:7] The third group of paintings is the mid-twentieth century Pattachitra (cloth-painting) originating from the province of Odisha in eastern India. This folk-art practice centres around Jagganath Temple in Puri where a demand for pilgrim souvenirs and inexpensive, transportable conduits of devotion evolved.[8:9:10]

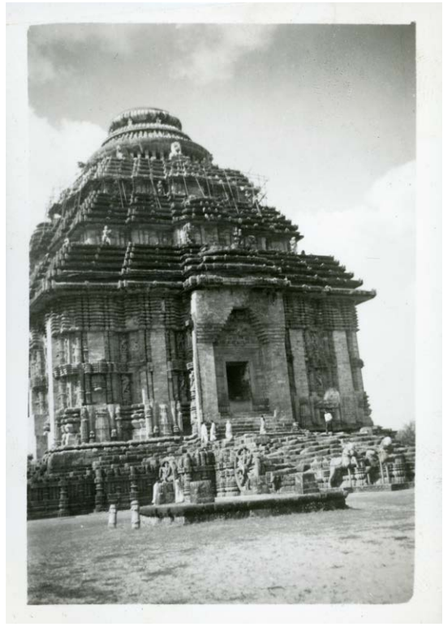
The overall selection of works cuts across social circumstance, place and time to provide a glimpse into pockets of everyday life from across India and from varying contexts. All three collections of painting explore scenes or depictions from Hindu-based narratives and scripture. The court paintings alone diverge into the secular, investigating portraiture, palace life, the complexities of matters of the heart and visual interpretations of poetry. While in many ways these three groupings of painting are distinct, an undeniable commonality exists in the manner in which they express and celebrate the rich history and culture of India.

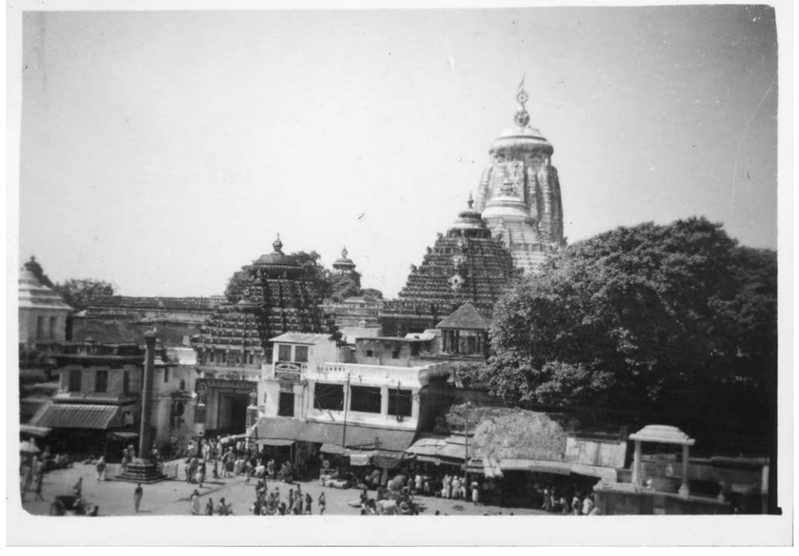
To a large extent, the Berndt Museum's exhibition program has long striven to honour the belief of Ronald Berndt that:

> ...if items of material culture are left to gather dust and immemorial labels in a museum, they are only dead things bereft of interest and meaning. Life needs to be breathed into them once more.[11]

When considering the splendour of the cultural material showcased in *Expressions of India*, it is heartily hoped this exchange of invigoration be reciprocal.

Unknown Rupkatha (Folk-tale) Scene (detail), 19th century. Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 29 x 21.2 cm. Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0873]

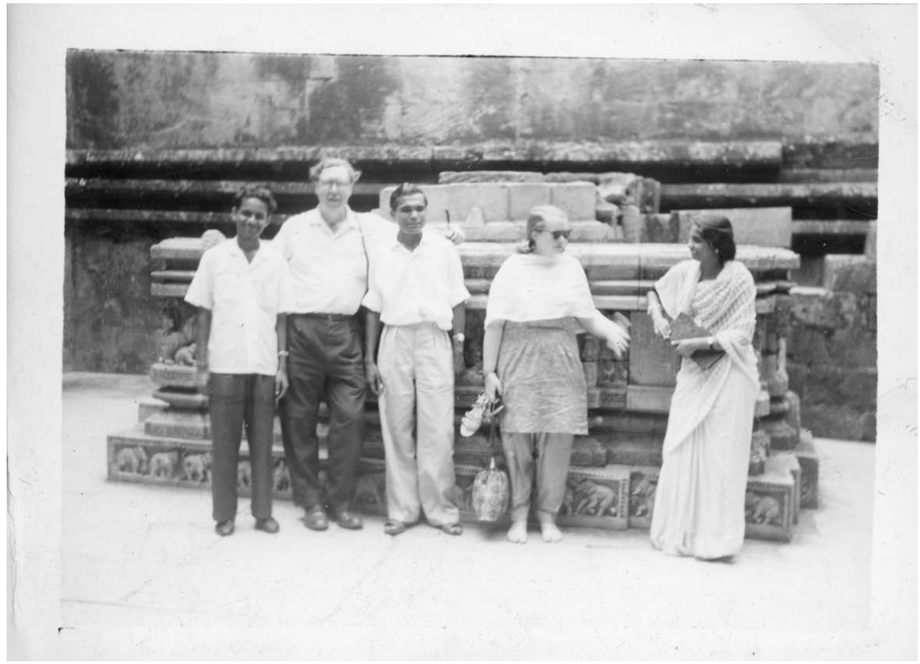




Prof Berndt and Jyotish Acharya at the Main Entrance of Konarak Temple 1965. Konarak, India. Photograph by Sri Ambika Paasad Mahanh. Reproduction of a black and white photograph, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection.

View of Konarak from the South East 1965. Konarak, India. Photograph by Sri Ambika Paasad Mahanh. Konarak, India. Reproduction of a black and white photograph, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection.

View of Jaganath Temple from the North West 1965. Puri, India. Photograph by Sri Ambika Paasad Mahanh. Konarak, India. Reproduction of a black and white photograph, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection.



The Party Visiting Konarak, Das - Receptionist of the Utkal University, Prof Berndt, Jyotish Acharya - Research Scholar, Mrs Berndt, Miss Sipra Kanungo – VI year Anthropology 1965. Konarak, India. Photograph by Sri Ambika Paasad Mahanh. Reproduction of a black and white photograph, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection.

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COURT PAINTINGS

The court paintings of eighteenth and nineteenth century India epitomise the cultural and political amalgam that began formation within the region almost five centuries prior.[1] Muslim forces invading from the west at the end of the twelfth century conquered and established themselves across the majority of the Indian subcontinent.[2] These Sultanates reigned for over 300 years until another Muslim dynasty, the Mughal Empire originating out of Central Asia, swept down across the subcontinent and supplanted them. Beleaguered, both militarily and socio-politically, first by the Sultanates and then by the Mughal Empire, the Rajput kingdom states of North-West India managed to cling to their Hindu beliefs and traditions as well as many elements of their administrative independence.[3] Hostilities persisted until the start of the seventeenth century when, one by one, the Hindu rulers accepted the sovereignty of the Mughal emperor Akbar in trade for positions within his court, conditional control over their individual territories and the preservation of their faith.[4] Allowed to flow more freely, it was at this point in time that cultural transference between the Mughal and Hindu states began to reach its height. Visits of tribute, residencies of tutelage and other forms of interaction between the Hindu nobility and the Mughal court helped catalyse this process.[5] The Mughal Empire brought with them all the fineries of their sophisticated and opulent court culture, in particular, the styles and traditions of Persian court painting.[6] Notable examples of this being the use of a cool palette, perspectival recession and identifiable portraiture. More readily exposed and accustomed to the refined and lavish offerings of Mughal court life, the Hindu nobility were quick to recognise the value of such cultural riches in demonstrating their stature and authority. They began sponsoring painters from their courts to learn the Persian styles and techniques, as well as commissioning Mughal court painters.[9] These artists would produce for them their own portraits of important identities, scenes of court and palace life as well as images of Hindu religious narratives.[10] Dependent upon the level of Mughal influence in each territory, it was not long before distinct regional styles of painting developed with variable degrees of blending of Mughal and classical Indian painting practice.[11]

The court paintings included as part of the Ronald and Catherine Berndt Bequest Collection were sought and collated by Ronald and Catherine over a span of years from a variety of secondary market sources around the world. These delicately detailed watercolour paintings utilising opaque paints on quality paper explore scenes of everyday palace life, examine the complexities of courtship and matters of the heart, as well as illustrate poetry, folk-tales, Hindu epics and scripture. The inclusion of secular themes in these paintings sets them apart from the other collections included in the exhibition, reflecting the social circumstance of those commissioning and accessing these works. Paintings such as these were traditionally utilised within a folio through which nobles would peruse and discuss amongst themselves or reflect upon during moments of solitude.[12]

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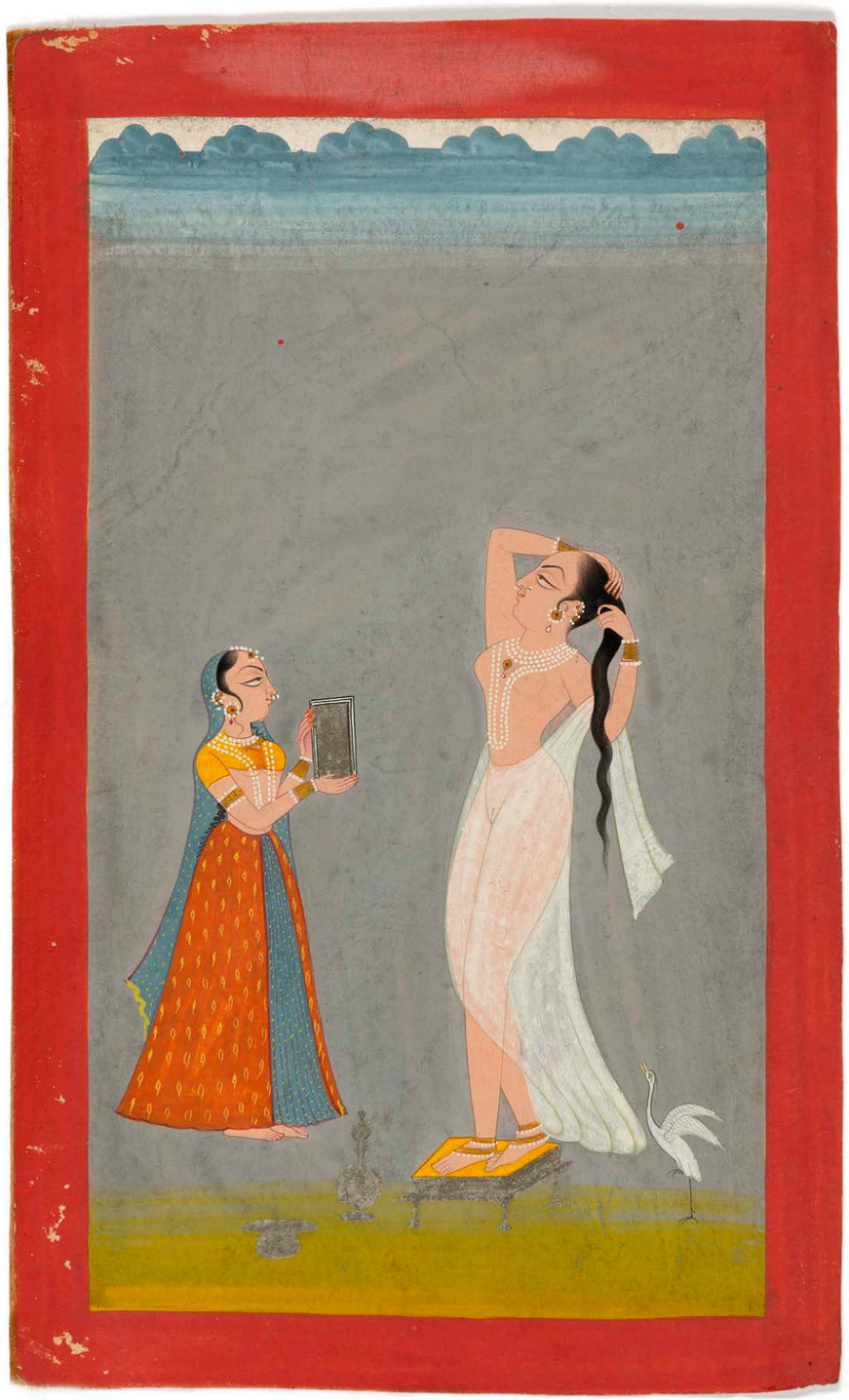
12. Cummins, J, 2006, *Indian Painting: From Cave Temples to the Colonial Period*, MFA Publications, Boston, p.8

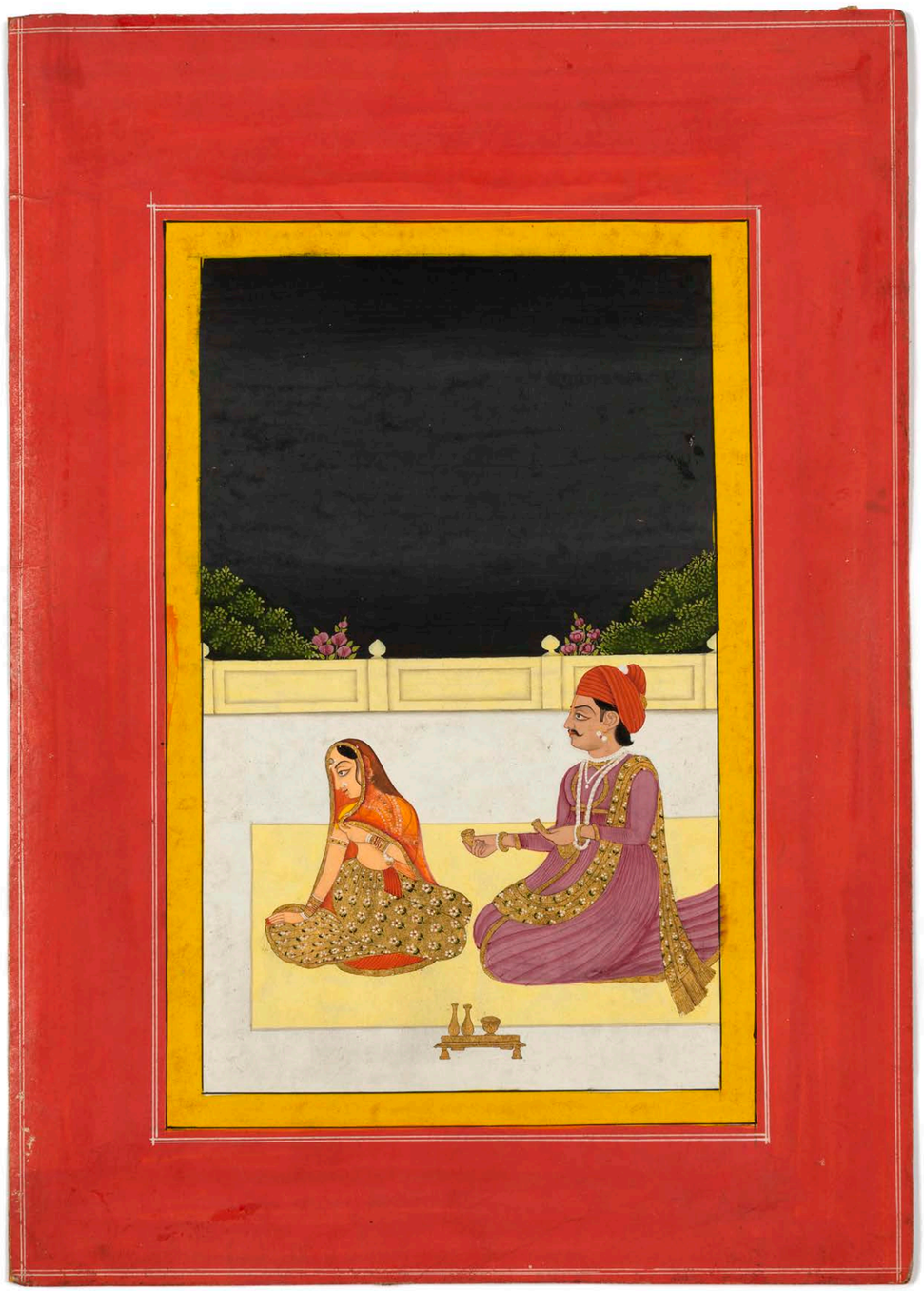
Portrait of a King Riding a Composite Horse (detail), late 18th century. Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 38.2 x 30.5 cm. Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0904]



A Lady at her Toilette with Attendant
19th century, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22 x 13.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0870]

This painting depicts a glimpse into the zenana – the women's sanctum within the various Maharaja and Maharana palaces across the Indian subcontinent. The zenana is where the women of the ruling family and the king's concubines lived in seclusion with various female attendants and entertainers. Typically, access to this sanctum was restricted to the ruler and a select few attendants. As such, most depictions of this subject are idealised imaginings by the artist, emphasising the poise, beauty and virtue of the court ladies - with the occasional soupçon of titillation and intrigue added into the mix.

The towering wall of the background denotes the seclusion of the zenana and elicits a sense of intrusion into a forbidden scene. The voyeuristic undertones of the image are compounded by the presence of the white crane in the bottom right corner. The crane is often symbolic of conjugal loyalty and devotion and in this instance could be purported to safeguard the ladies virtue. The viewer watches her, but perhaps it was not her intent to be viewed.



Nobleman and a Lady
19th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 31.3 x 21.7 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0872]

This painting depicts a night-time tryst between a young couple who sit on an open-air terrace beneath the stars. The nobleman pours and proffers a cup to the lady, who has looked away coyly, partially covering her face with her veil. She sits close, her knees facing his, perhaps suggesting she is not dismissive of his attentions, but rather, caught in a moment of self-consciousness.

Depictions exploring everyday concerns of the heart were a common theme for Indian miniature paintings. Much as they do in the present, through a myriad of mediums, examinations of these particular human interactions provided a source of intrigue and entertainment for those of means.

Portrait of a King Riding a Composite Horse
late 18th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 38.2 x 30.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0904]

This painting depicts a Maharana (King) – distinguishable by the nimbus of gold around his head, which indicates his divine ancestry. Treatment such as this was reserved solely for portrayals of kings and the avatars of gods. The general composition of the work is typical of equestrian portraiture of distinguished identities from the Indian courts – the shallow foreground; the rich malachite (green) background; the dramatic ribbon of clouded sky across the top; and horse and rider in motion. What is most unique about this painting is that the young Maharana looks straight out at the viewer, as if in acknowledgement of our presence. Archetypally, the subject was depicted in profile, looking forward, chin slightly raised, and an air of indifference towards his surrounds. This distinctive characteristic, in conjunction with the fantastic puzzle-like composite animal steed, suggest a more playful approach by the artist and could be said to lend greater weight to the majesty of the subjects portrayal. It is probable that this may in fact be, or is a derivative of, a depiction of King Solomon, who was often referred to as the 'lord of all animals' and thought to be able to speak to and command them.

Women through a Window
19th century, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 30.2 x 24.2 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0869]

This painting portrays two women sharing each other's company as they pass a window – perhaps one of the few glimpses an outsider might gain into the zenana, the secluded inner sanctum reserved for the women of the upper classes. The painting appears to have been composed in a manner that emphasises the significance of this sighting. The drawn curtain, window frame, dark space and shallow shading around the figures are all evocative of a stage scene playing out, with the two women in the spotlight. They stand, likely not knowing they are on display with gold hemmed diaphanous shawls and veritably bejewelled with pearls, rubies and more gold. The two women huddle closely, deep in each other's confidence, accentuated by the absence of any shading between them in contrast with the dark background. The intrigues they whisper to each other remain yet another mystery of the zenana.

Proşitapatika Nayika – A Lady Whose Beloved is Absent
19th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 30 x 21.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0871]

This paintings portrays Proşitapatika Nayika (a lady whose beloved is absent), which is one of the eight illustrations of dramatic personae known as Ashta-Nayika. These representations examine the archetypal emotional states of a female protagonist regarding her relationship with a man.

The lady sits on a terrace at night accompanied by her confidant. Night scenes are typically related to affairs of the heart, whether a tryst between two lovers, the pining of separated lovers or the anguish of heartbreak. The young lady sits on a cushion strewn rug, cup loosely held in hand, eyes closed and head bowed in despondency. She has been parted from a lover and her sorrow has been amplified by drink and the ominous gloom of the night. Her confidant kneels next to her in a pose of consolation, tending to their cups as needed.

Abhisarika Nayika (one going to meet her lover) and the Conflicted Confidant
19th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 31.7 x 21.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0874]

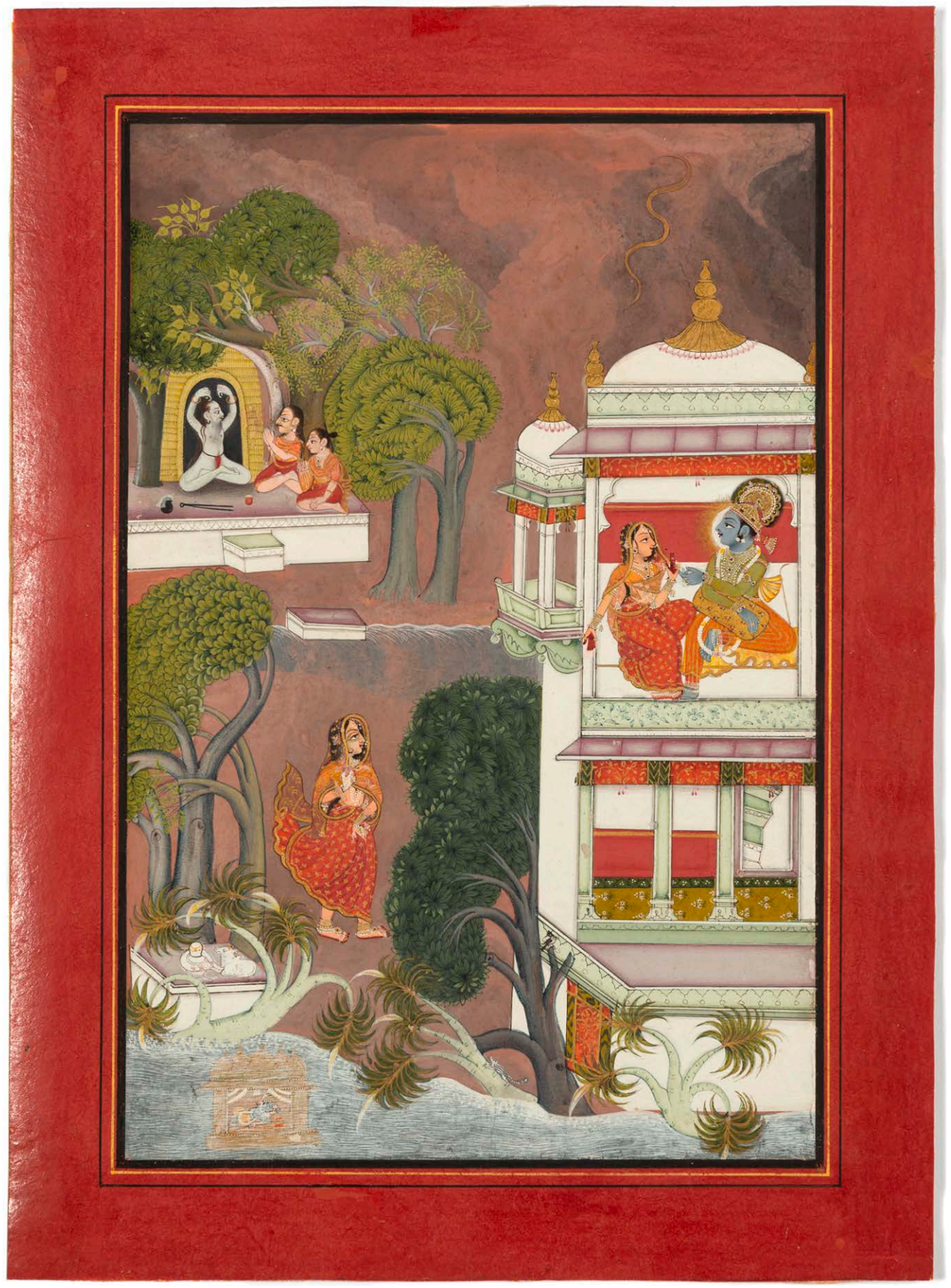
This paintings portrays Abhisarika Nayika (one going to meet her lover), which is one of the eight illustrations of dramatic personae known as Ashta-Nayika. These representations examine the archetypal emotional states of a female protagonist regarding her relationship with a man.

This painting portrays two women on a terrace walkway; one in a resplendent sheer gold outfit accentuated with red and gold slippers; the other in a more modest floral skirt with orange shawl and bare feet. The lady in gold appears to be captured in motion, determinedly striding towards the edge of the scene. She looks back at her confidant, who has her grasped by the arm, impeding her progress. The confidant has her free hand to her mouth in a gesture of conflicted thought. She appears unsure whether or not she should dissuade her companion from her current course, or she is having second thoughts about what they are undertaking together. The lady in gold has dressed herself to impress and is intent to meet a suitor perhaps considered to be less than suitable.

Krishna and Radha on Nari Kunjara - Composite Elephant Made of Gopis (Milkmaids)
19th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 31.6 x 25.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0907]

Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu, was born to Devaki and her husband Vasudeva. Devaki was sister to the tyrannical ruler of the Vrishni kingdom, Kansa, who was foretold the prophecy of his death at the hands of his sister's eighth son. To save Krishna from the wrath of Kansa on the day of his birth, Vasudeva carries the infant across the Yamuna River to a nearby cow herder's home and exchanges his son for another newborn. Krishna is raised by Nanda and his wife Yashoda amongst the Yadava tribe, where he steals butter as a child and the hearts of gopis (milkmaids) as an adolescent. He creates a flute from the bamboo growing along the banks of the Yamuna and enchants the gopis into song, dance and revelry with his music. Among the gopis he meets his beloved, the beautiful and compassionate Radha; their connection epitomising love-eternal.

This painting depicts the classic and celebrated portrayal of adolescent Krishna playing the flute; his cherished Radha by his side; and a group of enchanted gopis around them. The composite elephant formation taken by the gopis puts a more playful twist on the classical scene and is likely emblematic of Krishna's power and eminence.



The Month of Asarh (June – July)
19th century, Uniare, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 29 x 21.2 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0908]

This painting is an illustration to a Barahmasa (barah, twelve; masa, month) – a Hindu poem describing love, longing and other matters of the heart in relation to, and set within, a specific month, with the intent of evoking a particular mood. In this instance the month of Asarh (June – July) is explored. Asarh is in the midst of the monsoon season in India and this is particularly apparent in the depiction – the background rises and darkens into a tumultuous maelstrom while a golden ribbon of lightning serpentines through the clouds; a strong wind seems to blow from right to left bowing the trees; the river's waters are high and the plants on its bank appear to writhe and whirl. This time of the year was typically associated in Hindu poetry with the longing of separated lovers, and so a lonely maiden is portrayed wandering through a garden against the onslaught of her environs. She appears to glance upwards towards a pavilion where the idyllic lovers Krishna and Radha share an amorous moment together – ever the symbols of enduring love and devotion. In the top left corner, two princes consult a hermit before embarking on a journey, perhaps one is the object of the young maiden's longing. Nestled within a bower on the bank of the river is a small shrine with Lingam and Nandi (the bull) – symbolic associations to the god Shiva. Below the shrine, reflected in the surface of the water, is the image of a tiny golden pavilion in which Krishna and Radha lie in passionate embrace – perhaps a playful and titillating insight into the outcome of their tryst on the part of the artist.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in Exile Visited by Shurpanakha - Sister of Ravana
18th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 27.7 x 39.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0906]

Through a series of sequential panels, this painting details a significant moment in the Aranya Kanda (third episode of the Ramayana). After being exiled by his father King Dasharatha, Rama (seventh avatar of Vishnu) characteristically depicted with blue skin, joined by his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, built cottages on the Godavari River within the Panchavati Forest. It is here they encounter a rakshasi (demoness) named Shurpanakha - sister of Ravana the demon-king. Shurpanakha quickly becomes infatuated with Rama, who gently rebuffs her advances, stating his unyielding fidelity to his wife Sita. The rakshasi then turns her amorous attentions to Lakshmana, who indelicately informs Shurpanakha that she is not what he desires for his wife. Enraged by humiliation and envy, the demoness attempts to attack Sita but is thwarted by the ever-vigilant Lakshmana, who proceeds to cut off her nose and ear as punishment and sends her on her way back to her brother's island stronghold (Sri Lanka).

It is these events in the Ramayana that leads to the eventual abduction of Sita by Ravana, Shurpanakha's brother. The culminating battle to rescue Sita is depicted in the painting Rama and Lakshmana Battle Ravana.

Rama and Lakshmana Battle Ravana
19th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour on paper, 28.4 x 20.2 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0868]

This painting depicts the climactic final battle in the Yuddha/Langka Kanda – the penultimate episode of the Ramayana. This episode details the efforts of Rama (seventh avatar of Vishnu), with his brother Lakshmana and devoted monkey-general Hanuman, to rescue Rama's wife Sita from Ravana, the demon-king. This encounter takes place on Langka (Sri Lanka), Ravana's island stronghold. Rama and Lakshmana can be seen on the left wielding bows, Rama identifiable by his characteristic blue skin. Hanuman appears to grapple with Ravana's demon-general towards the bottom of the scene. A walled stronghold sits in the top right corner, where Sita is being held captive. The ten headed, twenty armed Ravana is depicted finally defeated by Rama, an arrow through his chest. It is told that the shot was so powerful, the arrow passed through the demon-king and circled the earth unhindered, finally coming to rest back in Rama's quiver.

Devi Mahatmyam - Durga Receiving the Homage of the Devas
late 18th century, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 30.4 x 40.7 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/0909]

This painting depicts a scene from the Devi Mahatmyam, which details the story of the goddess incarnation Durga being called upon to battle and defeat the demon Mahishasura, who has conquered the heavens, and whom no man can kill. In this scene Durga sits upon a raised platform next to her masculine counterpart Shiva. The other deities or Devas have gathered before them, each bequeathing Durga with a weapon, armour or boon emblematic of their power. She holds this myriad of armaments in her many outstretched hands, now fully equipped for the battle to come. Himavat, lord of the mountains gifts the goddess with a lion mount, the head of which is depicted behind the stone outcrop in the foreground. Nandi the cow, Shiva's symbolic companion and mount also makes an appearance in the bottom right corner of the painting, highlighting further the deity's prominence in this particular portrayal.

KALIGHAT PAINTINGS

If one were to visit Ronald and Catherine Berndt's residential home in the late 1960's and further venture into the couple's sunroom they would have been embraced with a wall of Indian watercolour paintings depicting religious iconography and mythological characters.

Known as Kalighat paintings, works such as these were created in the Kali Temple area on the ghat (bank) of the Burin Ganga canal, in Kolkata (formally Calcutta).[1] Made by the Bengali Hindus of the patua (painter) community, these works were created in the latter half of the 19th Century.[2] Calcutta during this period was a booming metropolis and Kalighat paintings were created and sold as pilgrim and tourist souvenirs to those flocking temples or visiting the British India capital for trade or tourism.[3] These inexpensive, mass produced images, executed with swift brush strokes and bold homemade dyes on mill-made paper, were intended to aid domestic worship and therefore typically depicted Hindu deities and scenes of religious life.[4] With the rise of a Western presence in Calcutta, Kalighat paintings soon developed to reflect the world of the Westernised babus (Hindu gentlemen), with the Kalighat patuas at times using the art form as a powerful instrument of satire – to mock westernisation.

Regardless of their sometimes satirical nature, the Kalighat paintings were popular items with Europeans, who brought the inexpensive works as either curios or as a symbol of Hindu iconography.[5] Christian missionaries also acquired these works to understand the beliefs of their potential Hindu converts, as Hinduism in the Christian faith was considered polytheistic and the idolatrous beliefs depicted in Kalighat paintings evidence of the 'need' for conversion.[6] Many Kalighat paintings were hung in Christian churches behind the altar as a reminder of missionary purpose,[7] whilst others were bound in scrapbooks and taken as mementoes back to their missionary homeland. To the Bengali Hindu's however, the Kalighat served as a powerful testament of their underlying Hindu worship.

For Ronald and Catherine Berndt, the attraction to the Calcutta Kalighat's was based on the imagery of Hindu iconography, praising the swift executions of the Kalighat patua to reflect the beliefs and attitudes of the Bengali people. Ronald Berndt acquired the collection of Kalighats from an Adelaide antiques dealer around 1963. They were purchased as a set pasted down in a Victorian album, the entirely religious nature of the album suggesting they were collected and inscribed by early Baptist missionaries and brought back to Adelaide as either a memento of missionary service in Calcutta or as an education tool to inform others of this far away religion and its many gods. From here the album spent some time in the hands of the renowned landscape watercolour artist Hans Heysen before they were sold to Mogul antiques of Adelaide, and subsequently purchased by the Berndt's. Of the original album, ten where acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria and six by the Art Gallery of New South Wales where they remain as part of their collections today.[8]

Ronald Berndt painstakingly removed each Kalighat painting from the Victorian album to breathe 'new life' into each work – to Ronald and Catherine Berndt culture was never 'frozen' nor 'dead' and by displaying the Kalighats in their household for so many years and later bequeathing them to the museum dedicated to their name, was to reignite Bengali 19th century culture and belief. The Berndt's collection of Kalighat paintings remain an object of study at the Berndt Museum of Anthropology and are one of the largest holdings of Kalighat painting in any Australian public institution.[9]

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4. Victoria and Albert Museum, *Kalighat Painting*, London, viewed 16 July 2020, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/kalighat-painting>
5. Brittlebank, K, 2008, 'Anthropology, Fine Art and Missionaries; The Berndt Kalighat Album Rediscovered,' *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 129.
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7. Brittlebank, K, 2008, 'Anthropology, Fine Art and Missionaries; The Berndt Kalighat Album Rediscovered,' Journal of the History of Collections, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 137.
8. Brittlebank, K, 2008, 'Anthropology, Fine Art and Missionaries; The Berndt Kalighat Album Rediscovered,' Journal of the History of Collections, Vol. 20, No. 1, p.132-138.
9. Brittlebank, K, 2008, 'Anthropology, Fine Art and Missionaries; The Berndt Kalighat Album Rediscovered,' Journal of the History of Collections, Vol. 20, No. 1, p.1 & 131.

Pavarti with Her Son Ganesha Sitting Amongst Lotus Lilies (detail), 1880-1890. Kolkata, India. Watercolour and tin on paper. Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0019]

Hari-Hara
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 46.2 x 30.8 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0055]

This image depicts Harihara, The Supreme God. Harihara incorporates the two Hindu deities Vishnu (Hari) and Shiva (Hara) to create a single, supreme entity revered by both Vaishnavites and Shaivites. The right-hand side of the figure depicts Shiva, who is illustrated wearing a tiger skin garb and holding a veena (stringed instrument). These attributes, along with the presence of snakes intertwined in a tightly coiled bun positioned high above his third eye indicate that Shiva is both an ascetic and a musician.

On the left is Vishnu, with his yellow dhoti, blue skin and peacock feather crown he symbolizes Krishna, Vishnu's eighth incarnation. It is difficult to distinguish which attributes Vishnu is holding but it is suggested he is holding a noose in his lower hand and a mace in his upper hand. Both are delicately adorned with silver filigree applied by the patuas (artists) by using tin alloy – a delightful detail that is typical of Kalighat painting.

Philosophically, Harihara is used to represent the unity of Shiva and Vishnu as different aspects of the same Ultimate Reality – Brahman, with depictions of the Supreme God dating back thousands of years. Some of the earliest sculptures of Harihara can be found in the surviving cave temples of India, including the 6th century Badami cave temples in Karnataka, in the southwest of India.

Shiva or Panchanana
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.6 x 29.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0030]

Here Shiva appears as Panchanana (Panchana), his fivefold aspect, the destroyer of the world. Shiva's five heads symbolise that he is the supreme lord of the universe as followed by Shaivites – a major tradition within Hinduism that reveres Shiva as the Supreme Being. Each head represents the five functions that Shiva performs as the Lord of the universe – Srishti (creation), Sthithi (preservation), Tirobhava (concealment), Anugraha (revelation) and Laya or Samhara (destruction) – functions that are also held by Brahman where the Hindu Trimurti (triple deity) of Brahman, Shiva and Vishnu are worshipped. Shiva's white or grey complexion, achieved by smearing the ashes of corpses on his body, serves as a reminder that all material existence is impermanent, soon to be ash, and that one should rather focus on pursuing spiritual liberation.

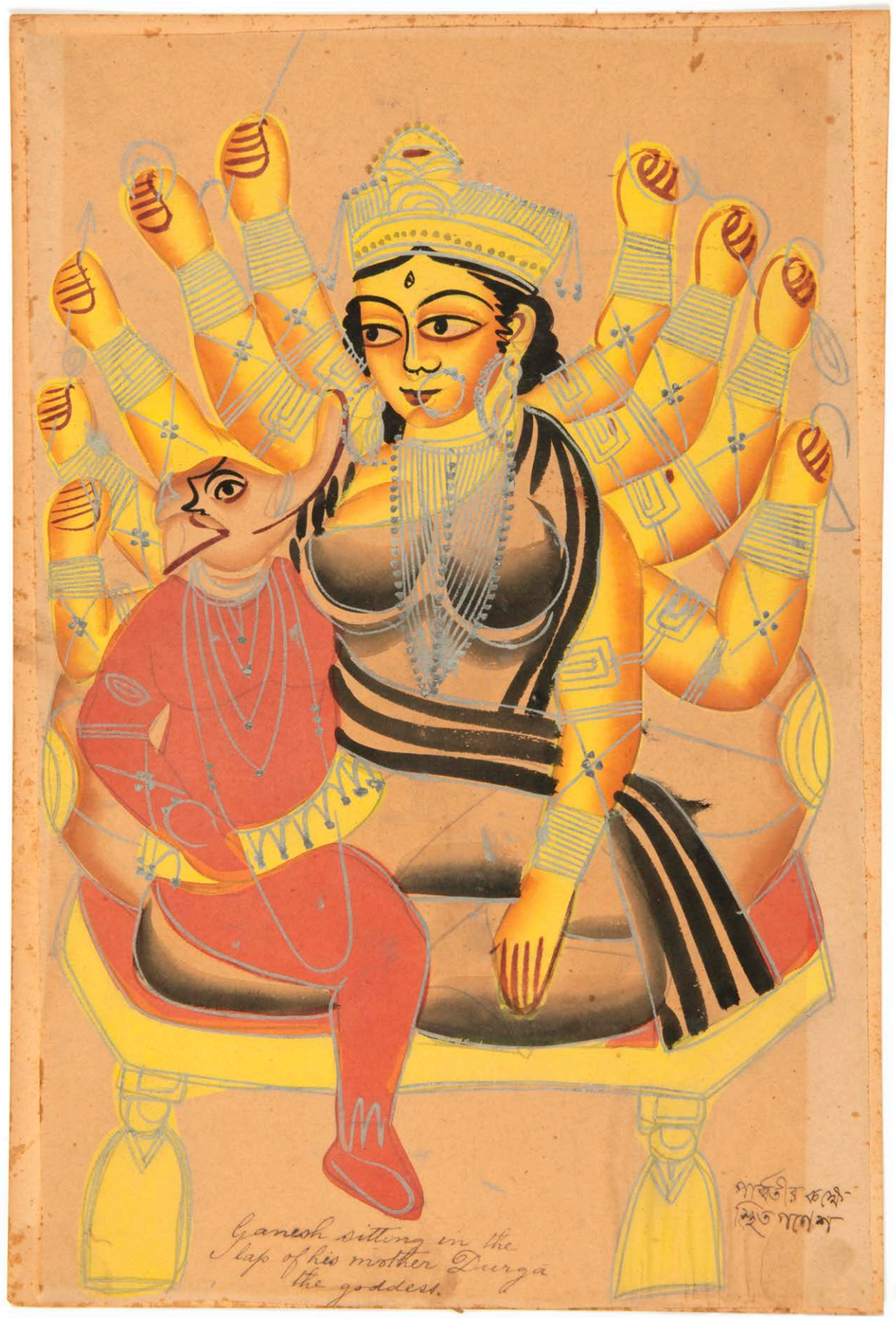
Shiva Belaha
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.5 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0027]

This particular Kalighat celebrates the marriage of Shiva and Parvarti, the goddess of fertility, love, devotion and also determination. In this painting Parvarti is seen to be placing a wedding garland on her soon to be husband Shiva - a depiction of intimate interaction between the divine couple. When Shiva and Parvarti are illustrated together they are typically shown in scenes of tranquil domesticity – either sitting intimately together on a throne or riding atop Shiva's sacred bull, Nandi – they epitomise marital felicity longed for in Hindu culture. The marriage of Lord Shiva and Princess Parvarti is considered as one of the greatest marriages of all times and is celebrated by some Hindu's at the Sital Sasthi festival, which also marks the beginning of the Monsoon season in India.

Shiva the Destroyer of the World Carrying the Dead Body of His Wife the Goddess Durga
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.8 x 27.8 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0026]

This painting depicts Shiva carrying the body of his wife Sati, the goddess of marital felicity and longevity. The Goddess Sati, meaning 'virtuous woman,' is an early incarnation of Parvati, they are considered one and the same. In this image Shiva glumly carries across his shoulders the lifeless body of his dear wife Sati, who has just committed suicide by self-immolation as a result of her father King Daksha's discontentment to their marriage. In hearing of the loss of his dear consort, an angry and grief-stricken Shiva performs the tandava dance of destruction, consequently wreaking havoc upon the Earth. The legacy of what comes next has many variations in Hindu mythology – some denote that it is during Shiva's rage ensued tandava dance that Sati's charred body fell apart and landed on different parts of the Earth, whilst others note that a mournful Daksha spent the rest of his life as a devotee of Shiva carrying parts of his daughter's body across the country. Other versions describe that Shiva called upon the God Vishnu to return a grief-stricken Shiva back to a position of equanimity. Vishnu used his Sudarshana Chakra to dismember Sati's lifeless body, with her dismembered body parts falling across various places on Earth. The presence of the chakra above Shiva and Sati in this Kalighat could suggest that the latter version applies to this portrayal. After the night of terror, an all forgiving Shiva restores lives to all those slain, granting them his blessings in the process.

The sites at which Sati's body parts fell upon the Earth make up the 51 Shakti Peethas and remain major centres of pilgrimage for Hindus.



Ganesha sitting in the Lap of His Mother, Durga the Goddess
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.6 x 29.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0025]

Seated here is the Goddess Parvati cradling her son Ganesha, the elephant headed god and one of the most widely celebrated gods in the Hindu pantheon. Hindu mythology presents many legends explaining how Ganesha came to have the head of an elephant, the following being a Bengali narration local to the Kalighat region. The legend states, the Goddess Parvati gave birth to an incredibly charming and beautiful child. Delighted with the grace of their newborn son, Parvati and Lord Shiva invited all the gods to celebrate his birth and look upon his splendour. All the gods came to their home at Mount Kailas to bless the newborn, including Shani, the embodiment of the planet Saturn. When it was Lord Shani's time to bless the child, he refused to look at the boy, as he was cursed with the gaze of destruction. Not knowing his curse, Parvati insisted that Shani look at her beloved child and not wanting to further offend Parvati, Shani obliged, gazing at the boy through the corner of his eye. At his gaze, the head of the boy fell off his neck, rolling away from his body. A horrified and grief stricken Parvati demanded the boy's life be saved with the replacement of his head. There are different variations as to who was involved in the following events, with some legends denoting that it was either Lord Vishnu or Lord Shiva who retrieved the infant a new head, whilst other mythologies state that it was Lord Brahma who found the head of an elephant and affixed it to the child's body. The infant was named Ganesha and was blessed as the god of wisdom, remover of obstacles and lord of beginnings.

Ganesha
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.2 x 28.1 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0017]

This depiction of lord Ganesha seated on a stool with his vahana (vehicle) the rat huddled underneath him is one of the classic Kalighat images that was reproduced by the Kalighat patuas (artists) many times throughout the 19th century. The pot-bellied Ganesha is rich in symbolism, his form and attributes serving as spiritual guides for Hindus. His pot-belly represents generosity and total acceptance, his large ears a reminder to listen more and his small mouth and singular tusk reminders to talk less, retain good and throw away unnecessary evil. In each hand Ganesha holds an article of spiritual importance – In his top right he holds a discus or chakra, the ultimate weapon, in his lower right the padma or lotus blossom, signifying enlightenment and the ascent of the spirit to ever greater heights. In his top left hand he holds a shankha or conch shell, the symbol of victory and fulfilment and in his lower left a club - sometimes portrayed as an axe or lasso – serving as a reminder to not fear obstacles but rather remove them.

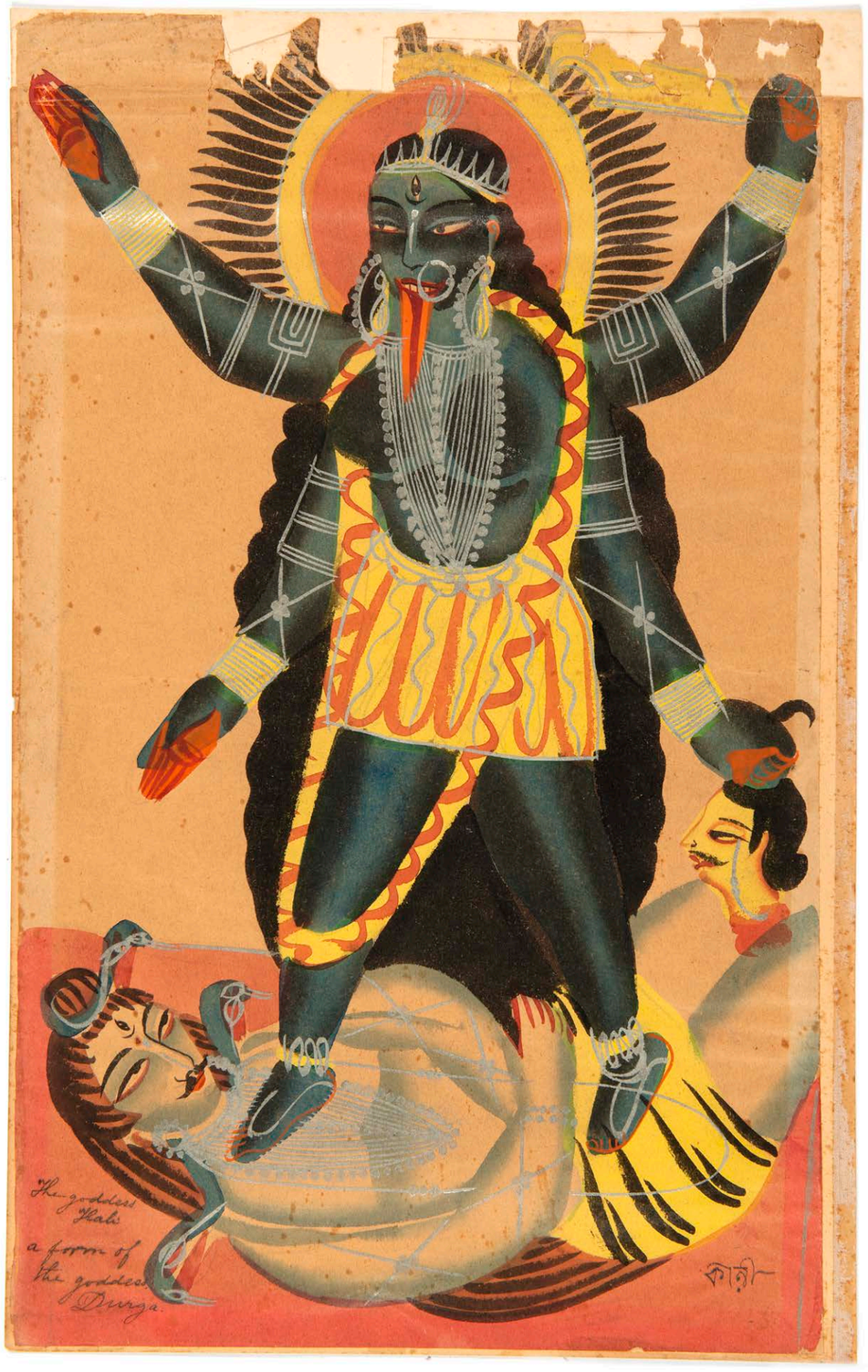
By understanding Ganesha's entire form and his principles it is believed that one can come closer to achieve moksha or liberation.

Durga as Mahishasura-Mardini, the Slayer of the Buffalo Demon
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.2 x 28 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0020]

Depicted here is the Hindu Goddess Durga as Mahishasuramardini, slaying Mahishasura, the buffalo demon. A ten-armed Durga stands triumphant atop her vahana (vehicle) the lion, as she grasps the hair of the buffalo demons true form in one hand, plunging a spear into his heart with another. The goddess is shown holding a weapon in each of her remaining hands. The buffalo demon Mahishasura is known as a deceitful shapeshifter in Hindu mythology, turning into different forms to pursue his evil ways until Durga ultimately slays him. It is interesting in this depiction that Mahishasura is wearing European buckled shoes, a means used by the Kalighat patuas to reflect the British presence in Calcutta during that time.

Goddess Kali in Kalighat Temple
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.6 x 29.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0040]

This painting provides an insight into both the origins of the Kalighat practise and the localised beliefs of Hindu society in 19th century Calcutta. It depicts the fearsome Goddess Kali in the temple dedicated to her name, the Kalighat Temple, Kolkata (previously Calcutta). The birthplace of Kalighat painting, the Kalighat temple is also a site of pilgrimage for many Hindu's as one of the 51 Shakti Peethas – a series of pilgrim destinations in Shaktism worshipped as the sites where the goddess Sati's (Lord Shiva's first consort) body parts are believed to have fallen upon earth. The Hindu goddess of time and change, Kali is the Goddess Durga in her most terrifying form. Here she is depicted as black skinned, with a protruding tongue, multiple arms wearing a collection of severed human heads around her neck, suggested here by the simplified semicircles around her neck. Her upper right hand is held in Abhayamudra – the gesture of fearlessness, her lower right in Varadamudra – the gesture of giving. In her upper left hand she holds a kharga, or sacrificial axe, in her lower hand the severed head of an asur (demon). She is on one hand a benevolent mother goddess and on the other, a violent, fearsome being.



The Goddess Kali
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 46.2 x 29.3 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0016]

This image is a classic portrayal of the Goddess Kali standing atop her husband Shiva. The origin of Kali begins with a ferocious and violent battle between Maa Durga – Kali's previous state – and the demon Raktabhija. The battle was merciless, with every drop of blood spilled from the demon being replaced with a new one, as ferocious as the previous. Perplexed and enraged by the situation, Durga twitched her eyebrows until Kali was born. The fearsome Kali immediately slayed Raktabhija by sucking the blood of the demon, whose severed head she holds in her lower left hand. In a victorious, blood intoxicated frenzy, Kali continued her rampage, slashing and dancing over the corpses of the slain demons, causing further destruction across the battlefield. Shiva was sent to pacify Kali and did so by laying down motionless amongst the corpses. A blood-intoxicated Kali continued to stagger across the corpses until suddenly she found her husband, Lord Shiva under her feet, stretching her tongue out in shame and embarrassment as she had committed an unthinkably disrespectful act of touching her divine husband with her feet, and so destruction came to an end. This act of stretching out one's tongue remains a symbol of embarrassment in Hindu culture today.

The God Vishnu as an Incarnation of Tortoise
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.6 x 28.8 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0053]

This image tells the story of Lord Vishnu as an incarnation of Kurma, the giant tortoise. As Preserver of the Universe, Vishnu descends to the earth assuming different incarnations whenever evil threatens to disrupt order. Kurma avatar is the second avatar of Dashavatara (referring to the ten principal incarnations of Vishnu) and belongs to the Satya Yuga period, explained primarily in the Bahgavad Purana, Agni Purana and Ramayana. Vishnu took the form of the giant tortoise to help the devas (gods) and asuras (demons) and ultimately save the earth from destruction. The devas and asuras were churning the ocean of milk in order to get Amrita or immortality. They were using Mount Mandara as the churning staff yet during this action Mandara begin to sink into the mud at the bottom of the milk ocean. Vishnu took the form of a giant tortoise Kurma and bore the weight of the mountain across his strong, broad back, ultimately saving the devas and asuras and entire earth from destruction. This kalighat is a literal translation of this legend, where an elaborately decorated Vishnu is seen sitting on a lotus above Mount Mandara being held up by a giant tortoise.

Lord Varaha the Third Incarnation of Vishnu
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0058]

This image depicts the battle between Varaha, the boar and incarnation of Lord Vishnu and the asura (demon) Hiranyaksha. Varaha is the third avatar of Dashavatara (referring to the ten principal incarnations of Vishnu) and belongs to the Satya Yuga period where he is depicted either as a complete boar or in the anthropomorphic form with a human body and a boar head, as is depicted in this Kalighat. Varaha appeared after the demon Hiranyaksha had taken the Earth or Prithyi and carried it to the bottom of the primordial waters, sometimes referred to as the 'Cosmic Ocean'. The battle between Varaha and Hiranyaksha is believed to have lasted a thousand years before the demon was finally slain, as pictured here trapped under the powerful figure of Varaha who holds the demons entrails high above his head in victory. Varaha retrieved the earth from the bottom of the ocean, carrying it between his tusks, and restored it to its place in the universe. It is to be noted that Hiranyaksha is wearing European buckled shoes – a detail which is commonly depicted on the feet of demons across the Kalighat style, reflecting the presence of the British colony and agency of the Kalighat patua to oppose Western civilisation.

Narasimha Rending the Demon Hiranyakasipu
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0057]

This image is a classic portrayal of Narasimha, lion incarnation of Vishnu, disembowelling the rakshasa (demon) Hiranyakasipu. Narasimha is the fourth avatar of Dashavatara (referring to the ten principal incarnations of Vishnu) belonging to the Satya Yuga period where he is presented with a human body and torso and the face of a lion. Hiranyakasipu is the powerful brother of Hiranyaksha who had previously been slain by Vishnu in his fourth incarnation as Varaha, and despised Vishnu for doing so – embarking on an especially vicious tirade persecuting all devotes of Vishnu. Hiranyakasipu had gained special powers by which he could not be killed during day or night, neither inside or outside, not on the ground nor in the sky and not by any weapon used by man or animal. The demon used these powers to viciously condemn the worship of Vishnu is his kingdom, even attempting several times to persecute his own son Prahlada. One evening at dusk (neither day nor night) during Hiranyakasipu's rampage, Vishnu descends to earth as Narasimha, his half-man, half-lion form (neither man nor animal). He emerges from a pillar in the temple courtyard (neither inside nor outside) and places Hiranyakasipu on his lap (neither on the ground nor in the sky) where he proceeds to disembowel the demon king with his claws (using no weapon). As illustrated, Narasimha holds the entails of the demon king in victory high above his head, restoring calm to earth and faith amongst his followers.

Vamana the Fifth Incarnation of Vishnu Quelling Bali
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 46.6 x 29.3 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0056]

This image tells the story of Vamana, the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu stepping on the head of Mahabali, the demon king of heaven and earth. Mahabali in early Hindu mythology is described as a generous but sometimes violent king, who was surround by asura (demon) associates who commonly abused power. Out of trickery, Mahabali had gained Amrita (nectar for eternal life) from the suras (deities) and was thus immortal, fighting many wars which granted him title over heaven and earth. The suras called upon Vishnu to save them from Mahabali's controlling authority, but Vishnu refused to join the war and kill Mahabali as he was a Vaishnavite (follower of Vishnu). Instead, Vishnu incarnated as Vamana the dwarf, and approached Mahabali, asking him for the 'three steps of land,' which Mahabali agreed to. Upon receiving this gift Vamana transformed into Vishnu's giant form, Trivikrama - depicted in this painting with four arms and three legs holding the attributes of Vishnu in each hand – taking all of heaven with one step and all of earth with his second. Being a devotee of Vishnu, Mahabali offered his own head for Vamana's third step. Depicted here in the garments worn typically by affluent gentlemen in Calcutta of the time, Mahabali is believed to have been granted a boon with Vamana's third step whereby he could return to earth every year, his annual homecoming celebrated in the harvesting festivals of Balipratipada and Onam, which have been popular festivals for Hindu's throughout India's history.

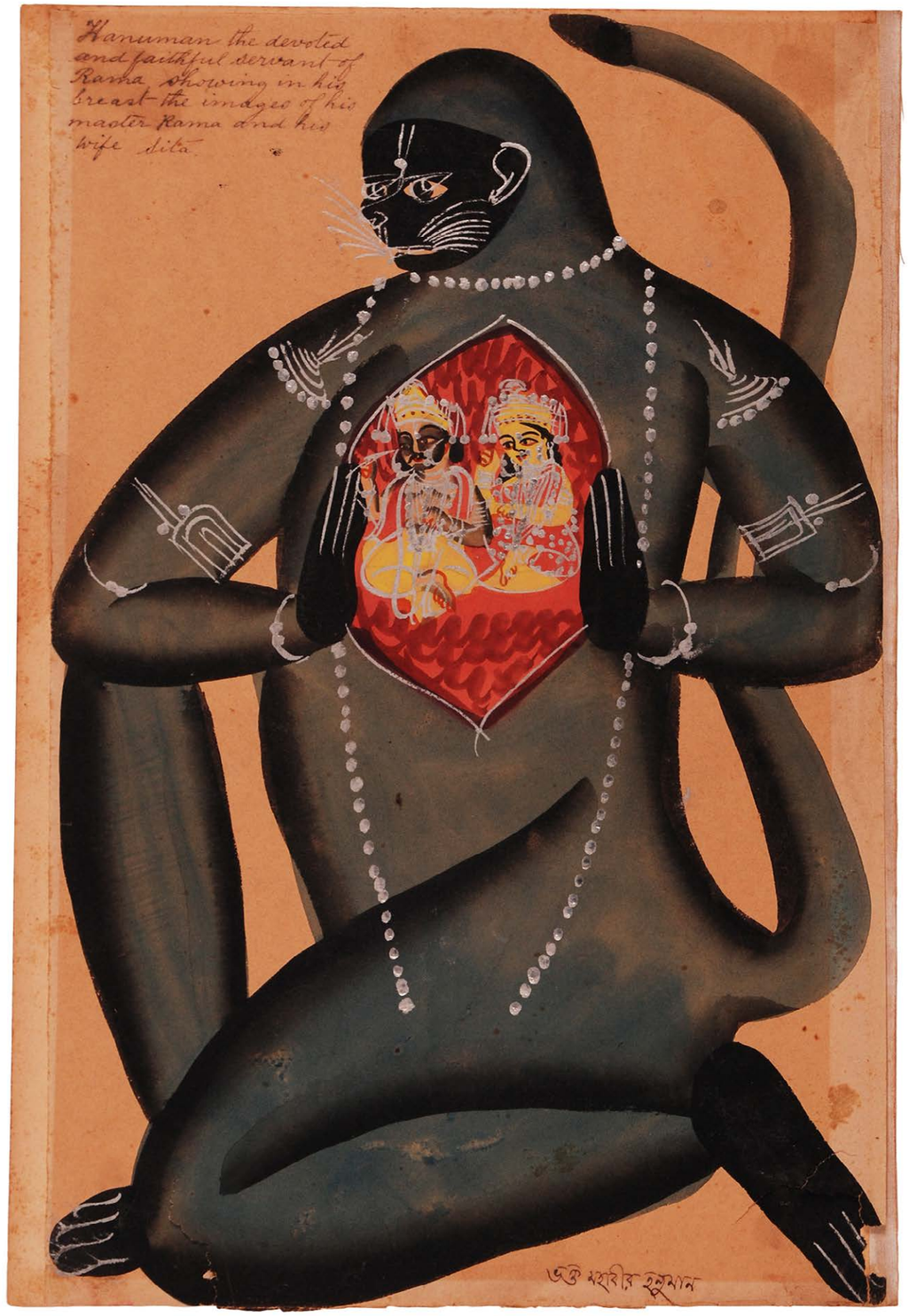
Parashurama the Sixth Incarnation of Vishnu Slaying his Mother Renuka
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 45.3 x 29.3 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0060]

This Kalighat depicts Parashurama, the sixth avatar of Vishnu, slaying his mother, Princess Renuka. Like other incarnations of Vishnu, Parashurama descends in a time when evil prevailed cosmic order on earth. He descends to earth as a mighty warrior who restores cosmic equilibrium across the earth by slaying the Kshatriya warriors (warrior class of Hindu society) who had begun to abuse their power and tyrannize people with their military strength and weaponry.

This painting however illustrates a particular scene of Parashurama's life as described in the Bhagvata Purana. Parashurama was born to the Brahman sage Jamadagni and his consort Princess Renuka, a member of the Kshatriya class. One day Renuka went to the river to fetch water where she came across a Gandharva (distinct heavenly being) bathing in the river. She was overcome by desire for the Gandharva, though only for a moment. Jamadagni had suspected Renuka of an unchaste thought and ordered his son's to cut off her head. The four eldest sons refused to behead Renuka, as the act of killing their mother was considered a great sin, but in denying this act they had greatly offended Jamadagni with their disobedience. Knowing that his father would grant him a boon for his compliance, Parasuma cut off Renuka's head with his axe as well as slaying his four brothers at his father's request. As promised, Parasuma was granted a boon and used it to bring his mother and brothers back to life and restore harmony within his family.

The War of Rama, King of Oudh, with His Two Son Lava and Kush
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 27.9 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0043]

This image depicts the battle scene between the great Ramachandra or Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu and his two twin sons Kusa and Lava. As described towards the end of the Sanskrit epic, the Ramayana, Sita (wife of Rama) whilst in exile deep in the forest gave birth to twin sons, Kusa and Lava, depicted here wearing simple peach coloured dhoti's, fiercely pointing arrows at their father. There are variations in the mythology behind why Rama and his sons went into battle, but all are associated with Rama being interrupted by the twins as he is about to perform Ashvamedha, a horse sacrificing ceremony. The sacrificial horse is seen tied to a tree whilst Rama fights his sons. One variation - and the one that best describes this image - details that whilst venturing into the forest, Rama's sacrificial horse bolts and is captured by Kusa and Lava who refuse to return the horse, initiating a fiery battle with Rama's aid Hanuman, the monkey king (pictured top left) and eventually Rama himself. In versions of this depiction Rama's vehicle Hanuman is seen to be holding a tree which he uses as a weapon to fight against the twins, yet it seems in this depiction that Hanuman could be holding one of Rama's arrows instead. The battle ceases when Rama suddenly realises that he is fighting his sons and the three of them reunite with Sita in harmony.

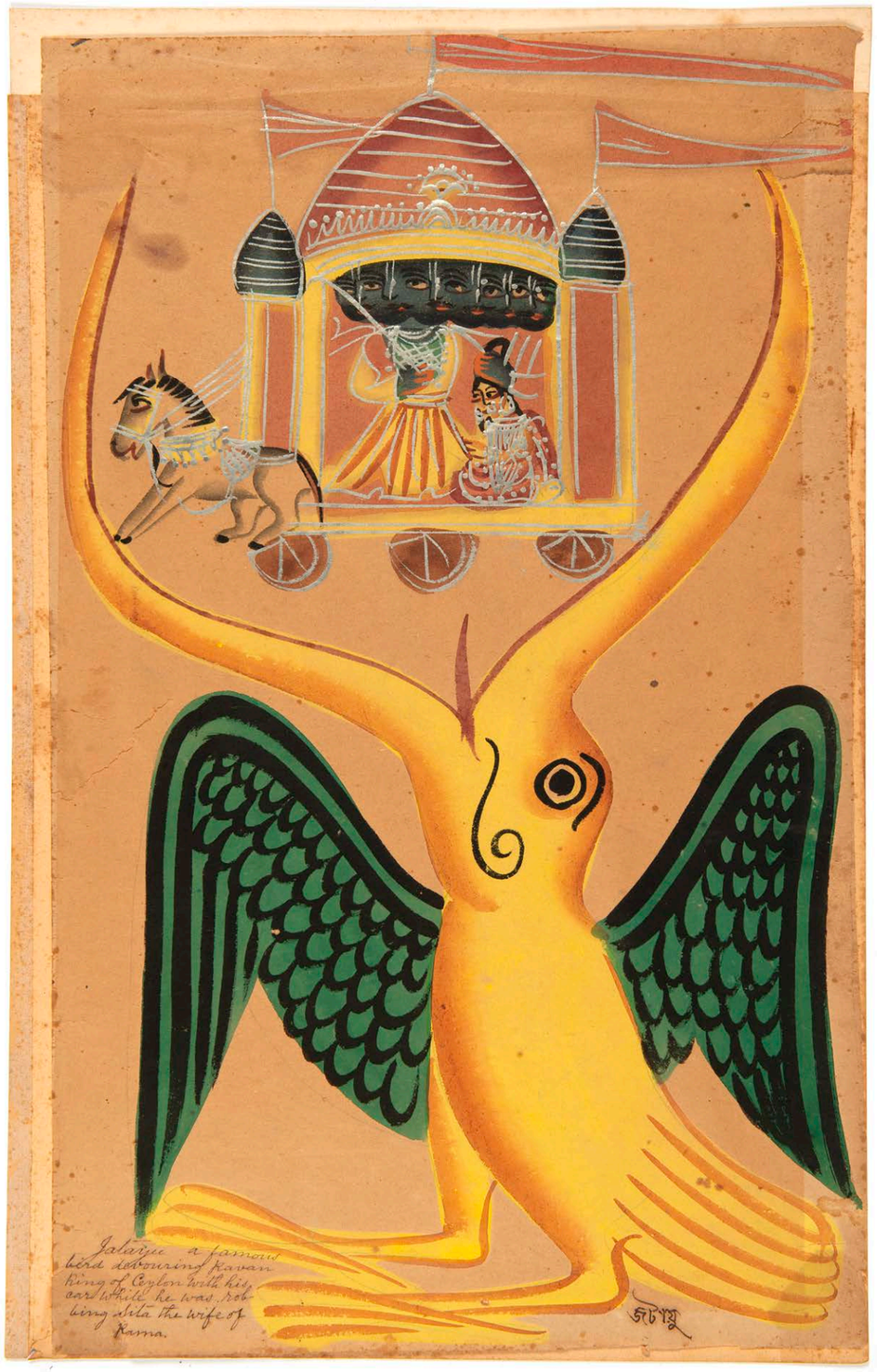


Hanuman the Devoted and Faithful Servant of Rama Showing in his Breast the Images of His Master Rama and His Wife Sita
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.5 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0054]

Illustrated here is Hanuman, the Monkey God and faithful servant of Rama, showing the image of Lord Rama and his wife Sita in his heart. Hanuman was a great devotee of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu and main protagonist of the great Hindu epic, the Ramayana. Blessed with superhuman powers, Hanuman rescues Lord Rama and his wife Sita from Ravana, King of Sri Lanka and asuras (demons). When Lord Rama asked what Hanuman would like in return for his brave service, he replies, “I desire nothing, Prabhu (Prince)!” Sita removed a valuable pearl necklace from her neck and offered it to the monkey king, who immediately began to break the pearls apart with his teeth. When a shocked Sita asked what he was doing, he replied that he was eternally grateful for the valuable gift that Sita had given him but he wanted to find if any of the pearls contained his beloved Lord Rama. Hanuman was assured that anything that he wore embodied Lord Rama as his devotion for the divinity was incessant. To prove this Hanuman placed the pearl necklace around his neck and tore open his chest to show both of them enshrined in his heart.

Hanuman the Faithful Servant of Rama Rescuing Rama and his Brother Lakshmana
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.6 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0049]

Scenes from the great Hindu epic, the Ramayana, were a popular feature in Kalighat painting, recounting the ventures of Prince Rama, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Here we see Hanuman the Monkey God and faithful servant of Rama carrying the prince and his brother Lakshmana across his strong shoulders. In each hand Hanuman carries a club ready to use in battle against the king of asuras (demons), Ravana, who abducted Rama's wife Sita and held her captive in his island stronghold, Langka (Sri Lanka). Usually painted in black, white or blue, Hanuman is red in this image indicating he is Mahavir, his heroic form. As Hindu mythology states, Hanuman paints his whole body in the vermillion pigment sindur as it promises longevity, the same pigment that Sita applies to her forehead. Atop his head, Hanuman wears an elaborate crown and across his body a web of intricately detailed silver jewellery, confirming his heroic form and superiority as monkey general, leading the battle against Ravana.



Jatayu, a Famous Bird Devouring Ravana, King of Ceylon, with His Car While He was Robbing Sita, the Wife of Rama
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 46.6 x 29.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0052]

This Kalighat illustrates a scene from the Hindu epic, the Ramayana that was popularly reproduced by the patuas (artists) many times. It depicts the wise, mythical bird Jatayu in his attempt to stop Ravana, the demon king of Langka (Sri Lanka) from kidnapping Lord Rama's beloved wife, Sita.

According to the legend, Jatayu, the divine bird, was resting in the forest when he was suddenly awoken by the helpless screams of Sita coming from above. He flew up to see Sita tightly bound in Ravana's flying chariot heading in the direction of the evil king's palace in Langka (Sri Lanka). The great Jatayu bravely obstructed the path of the chariot in an attempt to stop the abduction. According to Hindu mythology, Jatayu was a devotee of Rama and was willing to save the prince's beloved wife at any cost, even though he knew he was no match to the many headed, ferocious Ravana. As expected, Ravana threatened to kill Jatayu if he continued to interfere with his task, but Jatayu didn't back down and instead began thrashing at Ravana with his sharpened talons and hooked beak, all the while chanting Rama's name. Ravana, who was furious and bloody from Jatayu's assault began firing at the bird with his diamond studded arrows. He hit one of Jatayu's frail wings which tore right off, but the bird kept on fighting, desperately trying to free Sita from the wrath of the evil demon king. The battle lasted some time before Ravana took out one last giant arrow and shot it into Jatayu's other wing, the wise bird stripped of flight, fell to the ground bruised and battered, still calling out the name of Rama as he died.

Jatayumangalam, now called Chadayamangalam in Kerala, is believed to be the site where the battered body of Jatayu fell to the earth in his battle against Ravana.

Krishna the Eighth Incarnation of Vishnu
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 45.8 x 28 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0047]

This illustration depicts Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, known as the god of compassion, love and tenderness. This is a classic depiction of the popular deity, where he stands in his distinctive fluting pose, playing his flute to melodiously entice the gopis, or milkmaids to dance with him in the moonlight. An intricately decorated peacock crown sits atop his neatly kept hair, his flowing garments beautifully decorated in silver and shaded pigments, contrasting against his deep blue skin. Krishna is one of the most widely revered deities in Hindu culture even standing as a supreme god in his own right, the legends of his life richly represented in Kalighat painting.

Dadhimanthan – Krishna Stealing Butter from His Mother Yashoda
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 29.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0035]

Due to Krishna's popularity as one of India's favourite Hindu divinities, imagery depicting the scenes of his life were in high demand in Kali (the birthplace of Kalighat painting), where the patuas captured the divine god throughout all stages of his life. Depicted here is a scene from when Krishna was a child (known as Balakrishna), his most mischievous stage. Yashoda, Krishna's foster mother is pictured busily churning milk to make butter for her family whilst Krishna sneakily steals some butter straight from the mixing pail. Young Krishna with his blue skin and peacock feather crown mischievously plays pranks on his mother to no end, with playful scenes such as this a favourite amongst Hindu audiences.

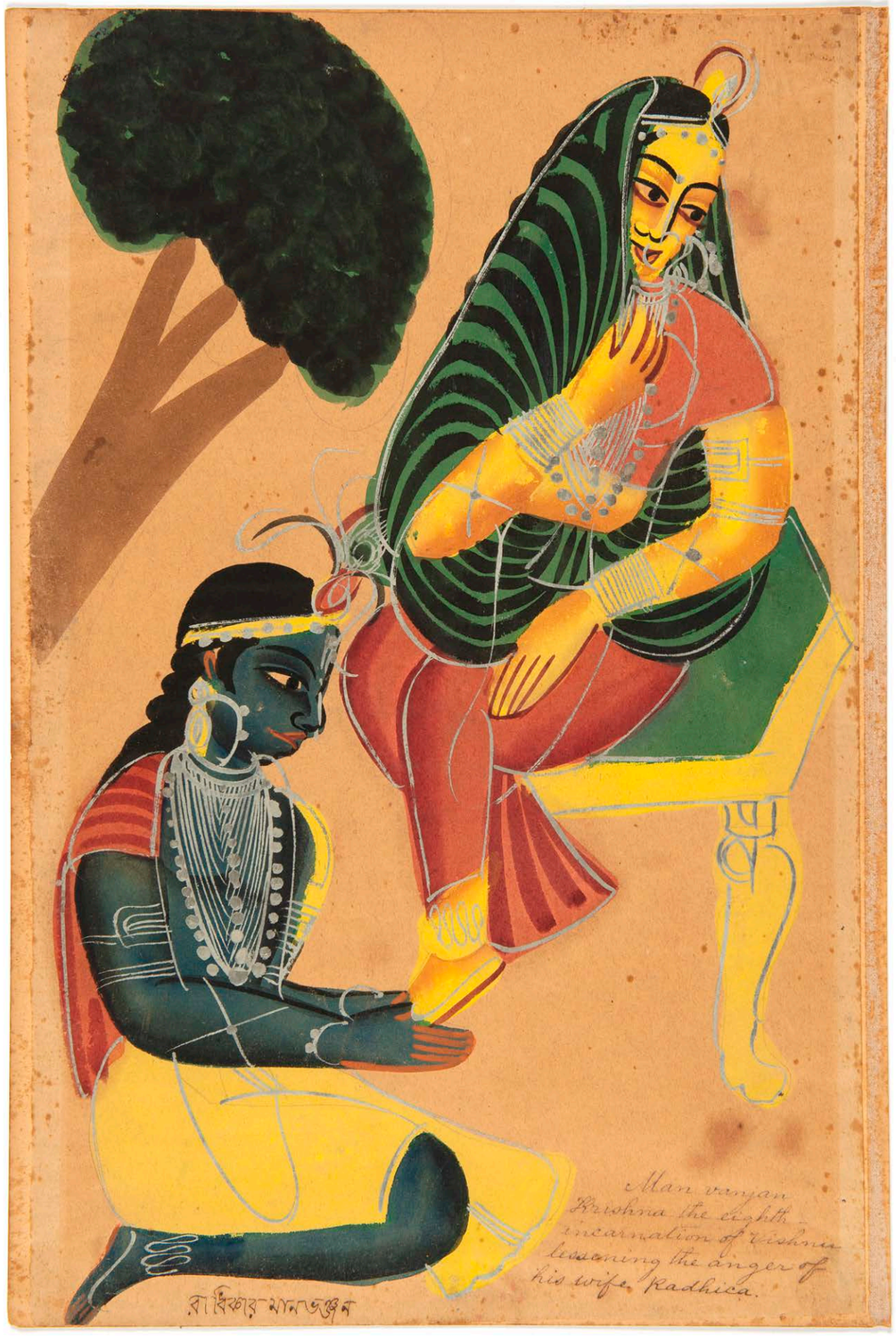
The Killing of the Demon Putana
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.5 x 29.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0038]

This illustration depicts Krishna as Balakrishna (childhood self) killing Putana, the rakshasa (demoness) known as the "killer of infants." Although commonly illustrated playing pranks on his mother Yashoda, Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, also performed many miracles and slew demons in his youth. According to Hindu mythology, Putana came to Vraja (previously Gokul), Krishna's home town, disguised as a young, beautiful woman with a plot to kill the young infant. Stunned by her beauty, Krishna's foster-mother Yashoda agreed when Putana asked if she could hold her young son and breastfeed him. Putana had smeared her breast with manadana, a deadly intoxicant that would undoubtedly kill young Krishna. Yet instead of taking to her breast, Krishna squeezed her breast, taking away her life as well as the poison milk intended to kill him. In immense pain Putana ran out of Vraja screaming with Krishna still clasped to her breast, until eventually she fell to the ground in silence. Returning to her demonic form after her death, the people of Vraja cut up Putana's body and buried her bones beneath the earth, burning her skin and flesh as to assure there was no possibility of the demoness returning to their town ever again.

Putana's evil act of attempting to kill Krishna was overshadowed by offering her breastmilk to the young deity, an act of 'supreme maternal devotion' and the reason she is sometimes considered as a foster-mother of Krishna. The legend of Krishna and Putana is narrated in numerous Hindu texts including the Harivamsa (part of the Mahabhrata), the Bhavagata Purana and several other Puranas.

Bastrakaran (Krishna Steals the Garments of the Unmarried Gopis)
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 28.1 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0044]

This Kalighat is a rather conservative representation of an iconic scene where Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, steals the garments of the unmarried gopis (milkmaids). As described in chapter 22 of the Bhavagata Purana, the unwed gopis had taken a vow of asceticism but longed to marry the divine and inimitable Krishna. During the month of Margasirsa (November-December) the gopis would journey to the Yamuna River, singing praise to Krishna as they walked. Aware of their activities, Krishna went down to the river where the gopis were bathing naked in the waters, stealing their clothes that were left on the river bed and climbing to top of a nearby kadamba tree. He laughed and teased at the gopis who were conflicted as to what they should do next – if Krishna refused to return their garments they would tell the king, but if he did, they would become his servants. Unafraid of judgement from the king, Krishna persuaded the cold and shivering gopis to emerge from the water and collect their garments, requesting that they must first join their palms together in a sign of homage to the demigods, who they had risked offending by bathing naked during their vows of austerity. The gopis did as Krishna asked and their garments were returned, and so they became Krishna's confidantes.



Manvanjan
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.5 x 29.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0036]

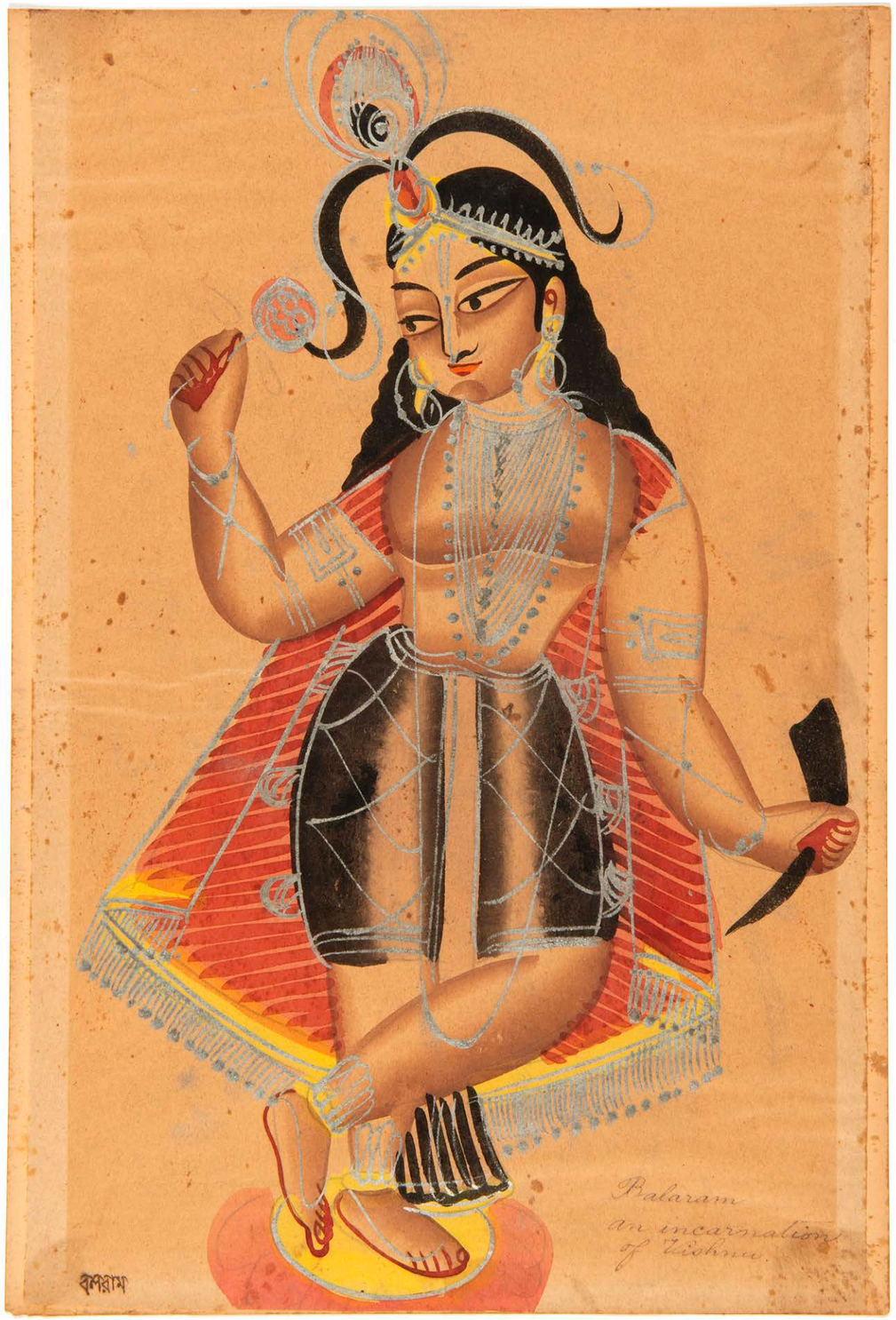
This image captures a tranquil scene between Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu and his beloved companion, the Hindu Goddess Radha. Krishna is depicted kneeling in quiet deference at the feet of Radha, who is sitting atop an elaborate stool, coyly concealing her face with her veil away from her dearest confidant. Before becoming Krishna's eternal consort, Radha was the chief of the brij gopis (milkmaids) during the time that Krishna lived amongst the gopa (cow-herders) of Vrindavan. She was the wife of another gopa yet was strongly devoted towards Lord Krishna, and soon became his beloved companion.

The Goddess Radha is highly revered in the Gaudiya Vaishnavism tradition (a Vaishnava Hindu movement inspired by the guru Chairtanya Mahaprbhu) and is worshipped as the goddess of love, compassion, tenderness and devotion. In other Vaishnava movements the goddess is symbolic of the human soul, sometimes even being considered as the feminine embodiment of Krishna himself.

Krishna Slaying the Bird-Demon Bakasura
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0059]

This Kalighat illustrates an iconic scene from the 11th chapter of the great Hindu history the Bhavagata Purana, in describing the childhood pastime of Krishna. Along with detailing Krishna's playful youth, the text also recounts the multiple demons he faced and ultimately defeated, including the great bird-demon Baraksura as depicted in this image. As legend describes, the cow-herders, including Krishna and his brother Balarama (also an incarnation of Vishnu), would go down to the bank of the Yamuna River daily to allow their calves to drink from the water. After the animals had finished, the boys themselves would take a drink from the river. One day, after drinking, the boys were confronted with a terrifying animal resembling something of a gigantic duck as big as a mountain. The name of the beast was Bakasura, a ferocious demon that had assumed the body of a giant duck with a razor sharp beak. A friend of the perilous Kamsa (Krishna's evil uncle), Bakasura had come to slay young Krishna, and immediately swallowed the young divinity by the river bank. The cowherds, led by Balarama, having just witnesses this act fell silent, as if they had died. But inside Bakasura's throat grew an intense burning sensation as he had swallowed Lord Krishna, the father of Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe in the disguise of a child of Nanda Maharaja, a cowherd man. The root of Bakasura's throat began to burn with such intensity that he disgorged Krishna, who came out unharmed. He immediately began attacking Krishna with his sharp beak, but Krishna, leader of Vaisnavas, grabbed the demon by the two halves of his beak and bifurcated the demon in front of all of the cowherds, as easy as a child splitting a blade of grass.

By defeating the evil Bakasura, Krishna had greatly pleased the demigods of heaven who showered the earth in flowers as a token of their congratulations.



Balarama - Krishna's Brother and Incarnation of Vishnu
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.5 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1963/0034]

This image depicts Balarama, the elder brother of Lord Krishna with whom he shared many adventures. In some Hindu legends, particularly in the Vaishnava sect of Hinduism, Balarama is considered one of the avatars of Vishnu in the list of Dashavatar (referring to the ten principal incarnations of Vishnu). Other legends recognise him as the human incarnation of the serpent Shesha – the Naga companion of Vishnu whom comes to Earth in three avatars during different Yuga cycles.

Holding a gada (mace) in his right hand and a plough in his left, Balarama marks the period of evolutionary history where human beings became reliant on agriculture and is known to use these farming tools in moments of battle. He is depicted here standing on a lotus leaf, his right foot raised to suggest dance and music, his fair skin contrasting to the blue complexity of his brother Krishna.

Balarama and His wife Revati
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.3 x 28.2 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0051]

This Kalighat depicts Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna, with his dear wife Revati. As described in the great Hindu epic the Mahabharata and Puranic texts the Bhagavata Purana and Vishnu Purana, Revati had travelled from an earlier yuga (time period) to marry Balarama. Revati was the daughter of King Kakudmi, who admired his talented daughter and sought for a divine deity to take her hand in marriage. As Hindu mythology states, Revati and Kakudmi travelled to the abode of Lord Brahma in Brahmaloka with a list of potential consorts appropriate for Revati. Upon hearing their request, Brahma chuckled loudly and explained to a perplexed father and daughter that time ran differently on different planes of existence and that since leaving earth to visit Brahmaloka, 27 chatur-yugas (time cycles) had passed, meaning that none of the candidates listed where still alive. A deflated Revati and Kakudmi were soon comforted with the news that the divine Vishnu was currently on earth in the form of Krishna and his brother Balarama, suggesting that Balarama would be worthy consort of Revati.

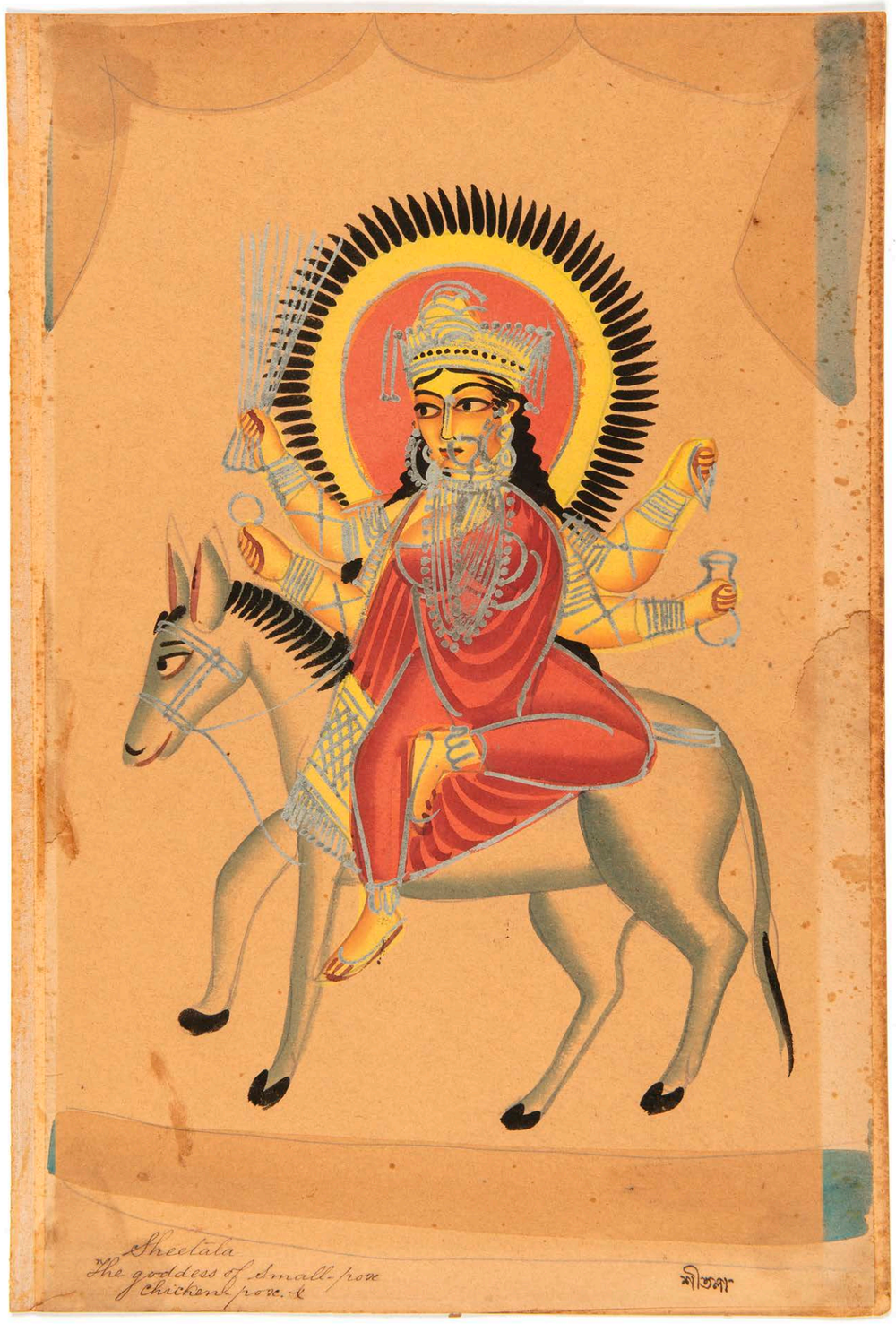
As suggested by Brahma, Revati and Kakudmi returned to a completely foreign earth to what they previously knew. Not only had the landscape and environment changed dramatically, but also society and mankind in general. They soon found the divine Balarama and proposed the marriage. Balarama agreed to the proposal on the condition that he could change Revati's physical stature to reflect that of current society. Because Revati and Kakudmi had come from previous yuga's, they were far taller and larger than the population currently living on earth. Using the plough depicted in his left hand, suggestive of agriculture, Balarama tapped on the head and shoulders of Revati until she was of the height of his people, where after they celebrated a heavenly marriage.

Jagganath, Balabhadra and Subhadra
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.5 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0037]

This Kalighat depicts the Jagganath trio – a triumvirate of regionally identified Hindu deities that are worshiped across parts of India, particularly at the Jagganath temple in Puri, Odisha. Jagganath, lord of the universe, distinguishable by his dark complexion stands alongside his siblings, Balabhadra and Subhadra, the former being his older brother, the later his younger sister. Together, the siblings belong to a particular version of Hindu mythology where they are incarnations or aspects of the divinity Vishnu, the preserver of the universe. Worshipped as a trio, Jagganath is considered an incarnation of Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu and his brother Balabhadra, an incarnation of Balarama, the ninth incarnation of Vishnu with whom he shares many adventures. Subhadra, depicted in the middle of this image, is an avatar of Yogamaya, goddess of illusion (Maya) and wife of Arjuna, a central figure in the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. Each depicted with large eyes settled in a near symmetrical face, the trio hold their arms high exposing a lack of hands, an identifying feature of Jagganath and his siblings.

Kalki the Tenth and Last Incarnation of Vishnu
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 29.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0046]

Illustrated in this Kalighat is Lord Kalki, the tenth and final incarnation of the divinity Vishnu. As described in Canto 12 of the Bhagvarta Purana, Lord Vishnu descends to earth in the form of the warrior Kalki, to end the Kali Yuga, the fourth and final era of existence in Hinduism. It is believed that each Yuga has less dharma (moral law driving Hindu behaviour) than the previous, and after 432,000 years, the Kali Yuga was a dark and destructive place which needed to be destroyed in order to restore dharma and calm on earth. The great Kalki descended to earth riding on Devadatta, his noble white steed. In his hand he held a fiery sword that he used to kill the wicked and ungodly that ruled the earth. Amidst the chaos, Kalki ushered in the Satya Yuga – the first era of the Yuga cycle - which replaced the dark and destructive Kali Yuga, ultimately restoring dharma and rejuvenating all existence. Because of this, Kalki is revered as the Lord and Master of Dharma, his prophecy worshiped by Vaishnavas who hold consider Vishnu as the Supreme Lord.



Shitala
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 29.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1963/0039]

This image depicts the Hindu Goddess Shitala (Sheetala), the goddess of smallpox and infectious diseases. Worshiped by many across North East India, including West Bengal, the birthplace of Kalighat painting, Shitala is an incarnation of the Goddess Durga. Depicted here sitting atop her donkey, Shitala is worshipped as the curer of diseases, sores, poxes, ghouls and ailments alike. Shitala, which literally translates to 'she who is cool' in Hindi, is depicted here holding the medicinal tools she uses in curing diseases - in her upper right hand she holds a short broom to dust away the spread of disease and in her lower left a vessel filled with either pulses (diseases) or cold water to cool the feverish. In her other hands Shitala holds the items typically held by Durga – a shankha or conch shell symbolic of happiness, and a chakra symbolising duty and righteousness. The Hindu festival Sheetala Ashtami is dedicated to the goddess of smallpox and is celebrated on the eighth day after Holi, the festival of colours.

Lakshmi and Saraswati
1880-1890, Kolkata, India.
Watercolour and tin on paper, 43.4 x 27.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology [1994/1001]

This Kalighat depicts the two eminent goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati, who together with Parvati make up the Tridevi, the triad of great goddesses. Depicted on the right is Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune. Illustrated in an elegantly flowing red dress as a symbol of fortune and wealth, Lakshmi is the wife of Vishnu, the preserver of the universe. As Vishnu's wife, Lakshmi takes on various forms to accompany Vishnu's many incarnations - when Vishnu is the highly revered Rama, Lakshmi is his wife Sita. When he is Parashurama, the axe wielding warrior, she is his loving wife Dharani. The Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped on Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights celebrated annually during the autumn months across India.

Standing alongside Lakshmi is Saraswati (Sarasvati), the goddess of knowledge, learning and the arts, particularly music. Revered as the embodiment of the sacred Sarasvati River, the goddess can be thought of as one of the earlier goddess deities worshipped in Vedic culture, and is the inventor of the Sanskrit language. She is later identified as the consort of the God Brahma, the creator of the universe. As part of the Tridevi, Saraswati, along with Lakshmi and Pavarti, work with the Trimurti of Brahama, Vishnu and Shiva to create, preserve and regenerate the universe respectively. Usually depicted atop her vehicle, a white swan, Lakshmi is illustrated here holding a stringed instrument indicating her affiliation with music. Both Saraswati and Lakshmi are illustrated standing atop a lotus flower as a symbol of their divine perfection.

PATTACHITRA PAINTINGS

Pattachitra, meaning ‘cloth-picture/painting’ in Sanskrit, is a generalised term used to describe a style and format of painting with origins in Odissa (now Odisha) and West Bengal.[1] The centuries old tradition conducted by artisans, known as chitrakaras, has strong technical and stylistic similarities to the classical Indian wall murals and palm leaf manuscript illustrations.[2] This style typically lacks perspectival recession and employs single tone backgrounds, a striking application of colour and predominantly profile portrayals. Furthermore, warm palettes dominate, making use of hand-mulled paints from readily available plant and mineral pigments, such as chalk or ground shell white, indigo, red lead, Indian yellow and charcoal-based black.[3] The rise of the pattachitra practice is thought to centre on the city of Puri, within which is located one of the most significant sites of Hindu worship, Jagganath Temple. It is suggested that painted representations of the temple and its iconography on cloth were employed for worship at times when the temple was closed or inaccessible.[4] This tradition quickly evolved into a demand for Jagganath pattachitra as pilgrim souvenirs, which served as a reminder and conduit for devotions.[5] Pilgrims soon requested pattachitra portraying other deities and scenes from Hindu histories, scripture and narratives.[6] The practice of painting this content in this manner likely grew outwards from Puri, encompassing much of Odissa and Bengal, providing to the masses not only a broadly attainable art form, but more importantly, readily accessible and transportable devotional iconography.[7] The utility of these paintings in this manner is evident from the compositional device of the festooned fabric painted across the top of many of the works – suggestive of an enclosed shrine or stage, protective curtain drawn, deity poised within or narrative scene playing out.

The dissolution of the Mughal Empire’s dominance in the Odissa region by the Hindu-centric Maratha Confederacy, in the late eighteenth century, likely resulted in an influx in the availability and dissemination of pattachitra paintings. Governed by conventions, patterns emerged in the composition, portrayals and choice of scenes depicted by the chitrakaras. Eventually artisans inherited master-copies from which they based their trade. The growing presence of the British and other European nations in the region at the turn of the nineteenth century also impacted upon the pattachitra trade. Artisans began experimenting with secular content in an effort to appease the predominantly Christian foreigners.[8] Furthermore, the readily available paintings, both religious and secular in nature, were acquired and sent back to Europe as tokens of the ‘exotic’.

This collection of paintings from the R.M and C.H bequest were likely acquired by Ronald and Catherine during their trip to India in 1965, during which time they visited Jagganath Temple and the surrounding district in Puri. One of the works included in this grouping is a prime example of a pilgrim souvenir pattachitra representing the temple and its devotional iconography.

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2. Elwin, V, 1961, *Folk Paintings of India*, Inter-National Cultural Centre, New Delhi, p.14
3. Samantaray, P.K, 2005, ‘Patta Chitra – Its Past and Present’, *Orissa Review*, December 2005, pp.49-50
4. Samantaray, P.K, 2005, ‘Patta Chitra – Its Past and Present’, *Orissa Review*, December 2005, p.48
5. Elwin, V, 1961, *Folk Paintings of India*, Inter-National Cultural Centre, New Delhi, p.14
6. Elwin, V, 1961, *Folk Paintings of India*, Inter-National Cultural Centre, New Delhi, p.16
7. Kanungo, P, Sethi, N & Biswal, P 2020, ‘Socio-economic condition, welfare schemes, and occupational structure of ‘pattachitra’ artisans in Odisha, India’, *Creative Industries Journal*, p.2
8. Elwin, V, 1961, *Folk Paintings of India*, Inter-National Cultural Centre, New Delhi, p.16

Matsya Slaying the Demon Shankhasura (detail), mid-20th century. Odisha, India. Opaque watercolour on cloth, 30.5 x 40.6 cm. Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0862]

Jagganath, Balabhadra and Subhadra at Puri Temple
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour and unknown surface coating on cloth, 58.9 x 72.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0806]

This painting is a definitive example of a Jagganath Temple pilgrimage souvenir pattachitra celebrating Jagganath along with his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra. The temple dedicated to Jagganath within Puri in the Odisha region of India has been one of the country's most prominent Hindu pilgrimage sites for centuries.

Jagganath, lord of the universe, is a regionally worshipped deity and is considered an aspect or avatar of Vishnu. He is typically celebrated as part of a triumvirate with his brother and sister. The icons of this trinity are carved from sacred logs known as daru which are decorated with symmetrical faces, large eyes and an absence of appendages. They sit upon an ornately embellished dais or ratnabedi within the inner sanctum of the temple in Puri. Jagganath is distinguishable from his siblings with round eyes and face of black. In this pattachitra the three icons sit in the centre, against the towering sikhara structure of the temple, Balabhadra on the left and Subhadra characteristically between the brothers. Other aspects of significance at the temple site as well as scenes of Hindu narratives play out around them, including Dashavatara – the ten avatars of Vishnu – over the apex of the sikhara and a reference to the Ramayana in the top right corner.

Krishna Steals the Garments of the Gopis (Milkmaids)
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 30.6 x 22.7 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0852]

This pattachitra derives from an iconic scene from the 22nd chapter, tenth canto of the Bhavagata Purana – one of the eighteen Hindu great histories. The chapter speaks of a group of unwed young gopis (milkmaids) who have taken vows of asceticism. Each wishing to marry the inimitable Krishna, eighth avatar of Vishnu, they beseeched the goddess Katyayani, through worship, for a betrothal. During the month of Margasirsa (November – December) these maidens would take each other's hands, sing praise for Krishna and journey to the Yamuna River to bathe. Aware of the gopis' activities, one day Krishna went down to the river where the maidens were bathing nude in the waters. Seeing that they had left their garments on the bank of the river, Krishna collected them all over his shoulder and climbed a nearby kadamba tree. Laughing and teasing the gopis, Krishna told them he understood how fatigued they must be by their vows of austerity and suggested they should each come out of the water and claim their clothes. Seeing the jest, the maidens countered that if he didn't give back their garments they would tell the king, but if he did, they would see out his will as devoted servants. Not at all fearing the judgement of the king, Krishna informed the gopis that if they truly wished to become his maidservants, as he knew they did, they would heed his word, come out of the water and collect their clothes. Shivering from the cold water, the maidens acquiesced and coyly came out of the river covering their modesty with their hands. Not wanting ill to befall the gopis Krishna warned that by bathing naked in the midst of their vows, they risked the offense of the demigods, but if they joined palms in a sign of obeisance the offense would be forgiven. The young maidens did as Krishna said and in turn their clothes were returned.

Krishna Riding a Composite Horse Made of Gopis (Milkmaids)
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour and unknown surface coating on cloth, 24.7 x 37.5 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0829]

This pattachitra depicts Krishna, eighth avatar of Vishnu, riding a composite horse made of gopis (milkmaids). Growing up amongst cowherds, Krishna was adored by the gopis during his adolescent period. He is often depicted surrounded by the beautiful maidens, incited and enchanted into revelry and dance by his roguish charms and charisma. In this painting the gopis composing the horse-form appear to prance, tumble and contort in a majestic acrobatic display of exuberance. Krishna is perched atop the formation cheerfully directing the spectacle with an arrow in one hand and Sharanga, celestial bow of Vishnu slung over his shoulder.

Krishna Defeating Kaliya the Naga Serpent
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 20.4 x 17.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0858]

This pattachitra illustrates a scene from the sixteenth chapter, tenth canto of the Bhavagata Purana – one of the eighteen Hindu great histories. This chapter speaks of a great multi-headed serpent named Kaliya, who resides in the depths of the Yamuna River. Kaliya pollutes the river with his poison and terrorizes the nearby Gokul people if they stray too close to his domain, including, most significantly, Krishna's beloved Radha. Angered by the great serpent's actions, Krishna confronts Kaliya, who with his tail ensnares the eighth avatar of Visnhu and drags him into the river's depths. Kaliya begins to constrict Krishna with his body, but the mighty deity incarnate expands himself until the great serpent is forced to release him. Krishna then jumps onto Kaliya and begins to dance on his many heads, causing the serpent to expel all his poison so that he can no longer pollute the Yamuna River. Assuming the weight of the universe Krishna continues to beat Kaliya to near death with his feet. Seeing that their husband was about to die, the naga (half-woman, half-snake) wives of Kaliya beseech Krishna with palms joined for mercy. Acknowledging the might of Krishna, Kaliya surrenders, promising not to terrorize anyone again and agreeing to leave for Ramanaka Island.

In the painting Krishna appears to be portrayed in his expanded form, grasping Kaliya's tail whilst dancing on the serpents many heads. He holds in his other hand his magical bamboo flute, eliciting the rhythm of the dance. The naga wives of Kaliya are represented on either side of the scene, palms joined in prayer and reverence to Krishna.

Krishna with his Consort Radha
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 27.6 x 26 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0860]

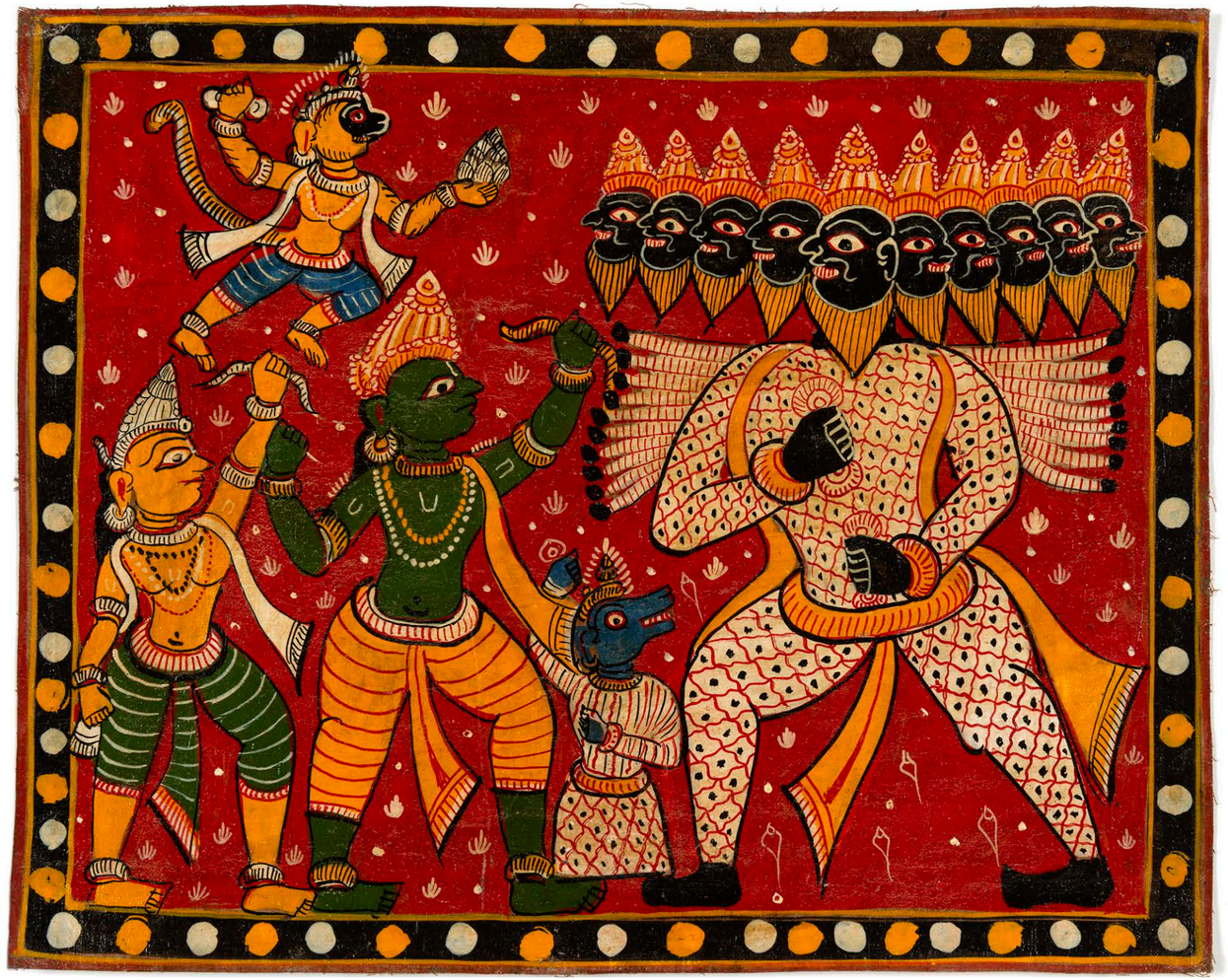
In this pattachitra Krishna, eighth avatar of Vishnu and his beloved Radha are depicted in an iconic embrace. Their bodies are entwined in a near symmetrical union of form as they gaze adoringly into each other's eyes. The lovers both appear to hold Krishna's bamboo flute, with which he enthrals and incites passion. He lovingly cups the back of her head as if in the process of stealing a kiss. The branches of a tree symbolically in full blossom waver behind the pair as petals shower across the scene. Gopi (milkmaid) handmaidens stand to either side, all the while devotedly fanning the couple.

Narasimha Fighting Hiranyakashipu the Demon King
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 12.8 x 20.4 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0851]

This painting depicts the fourth avatar of Vishnu, Narasimha, battling the near-invincible demon Hiranyakashipu and protecting his devotee Prahlada. It is said that Hiranyakashipu obtained powers from the deity Brahma, with which he could not be slain during the day or night, with any weapon, inside or outside, by any man or animal. Corrupted by his power and arrogance the demon wrought havoc throughout the heavens and earth, persecuting those who would not bow to his will, including the followers of Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu's own son Prahlada was one such devotee, refusing to renounce Vishnu when challenged by his father. Enraged by this perceived betrayal and defiance, Hiranyakashipu became hostile towards his son. In order to protect his faithful subject and defeat the demon, Vishnu emerged in the form of Narasimha, half lion, half man; neither fully man nor animal. With his mighty clawed hands he needed no traditional weapons. Narasimha fought with Hiranyakashipu and at the point of transition between night and day, in a location that could be perceived as either inside or outside, he plunged his hands into the demon's chest, slaying him.

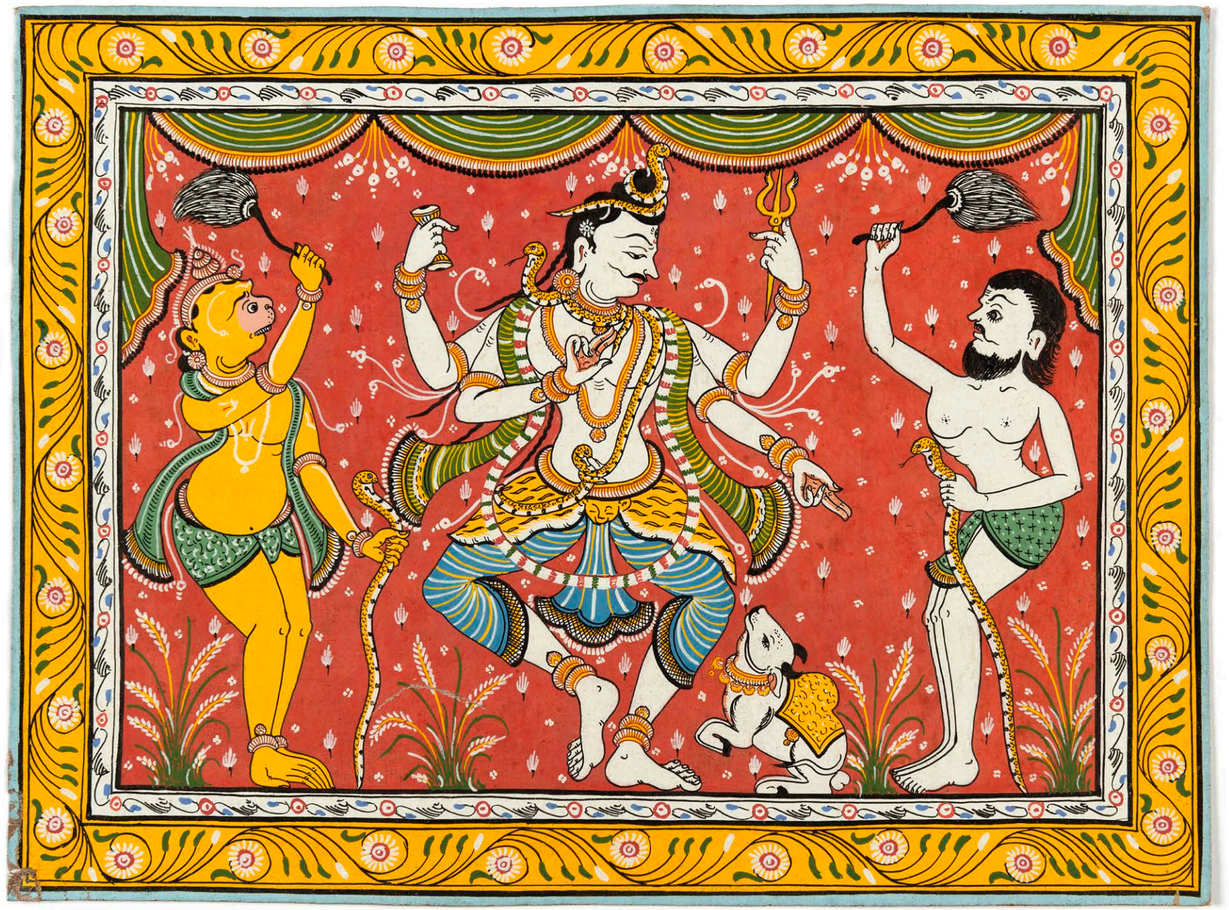
Narasimha – Fourth Avatar of Vishnu
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 30.6 x 22.7 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0854]

This pattachitra depicts the mighty fourth avatar of Vishnu, Narasimha, the half-lion, half man. He sits cross-legged upon a dais, his two upper arms hold two of the four emblems of Vishnu, the chakra (discus) and shankha (conch shell). His upper hands also form the Karana Mudra, a gesture used to expel evil, while his lower hands are extended downwards with palm out in the Varada Mudra, a gesture of giving. Prahlada the devotee, the protection of whom is often said to be the catalyst for Vishnu's incarnation in this form, sits over the avatar's heart. This is perhaps symbolic of the rightful place of those with unwavering faith in the deity.



Rama and Lakshmana Battle Ravana
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour and unknown surface coating on cloth, 30.5 x 37.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0827]

This pattachitra illustrates the iconic climactic final battle from the celebrated Hindu epic - the Ramayana. The unfairly exiled prince Rama with his brother Lakshmana and devoted monkey-general Hanuman lead an army of monkeys and bears against Ravana, the demon-king, who holds Rama's beloved Sita prisoner. Rama, the seventh avatar of the deity Vishnu, depicted with green-skin, raises into the air the celestial golden bow named Sharanga, with which he will finally slay Ravana.



Nataraja – Shiva as Lord of the Dance
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 22.9 x 30.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0853]

This pattachitra depicts Nataraja – the deity Shiva in the form of the divine dancer. The god is being fanned by the wizened devotee Bhringi to the right and the monkey Hanuman, sometimes thought to be an incarnation of Shiva, on the left. Nandi the bull, Shiva's companion, mount and gate-guardian can be seen at his master's feet.

The depiction of Nataraja in this painting is absent a number of the more classic iconographic elements. Representations of Shiva in this motion are typically associated with the playing out of the great cyclical drama of destruction and dissolution for the purpose of creation. In one hand he holds a small damaru (two-headed drum) and in another his iconic trishula (short-hafted trident). It is proposed the trishula is a symbolic reminder of the great trinities; past, present and future; creation, preservation and destruction; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Cobras also feature throughout the painting, emblematic of Shiva's assured dominance over all forms of evil.

The presence of Bhringi the emaciated, three-legged sage is representative of man's devotion to Shiva and serves as a reminder within Shaivism. Parvati, Shiva's goddess consort, rescinded the tantric feminine half of Bhringi's body (flesh, muscle and blood), making him a sack of skin and bone. The sage had slighted the goddess through his zealous devotion to Shiva alone, failing to acknowledge Parvati as one half of the whole in Shaivism. Eventually taking pity on the remorseful sage, Shiva gave him a third leg so that he could again stand.

Anantashayana Vishnu
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 19.9 x 26.9 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0857]

This pattachitra depicts Anantashayana Vishnu – Vishnu sleeping on Ananta Shesha, the endless serpent – and explores the story of the creation or re-creation of the universe.

The universe is formed by Brahma the creator, sustained by Vishnu the preserver and eventually unmade by Shiva the destroyer in a constant cycle. It is said that the universe shares the lifespan of Brahma, who upon reaching the end of one lifespan is reborn from a lotus blossom that grows from Vishnu's navel.

Vishnu is portrayed in the painting resting from the arduous feat of sustaining the prior universe. In the midst of the Ocean of Being, he reclines upon Ananta Shesha, the multi-headed serpent, who is typically associated with the passage of time. From his navel sprouts the lotus blossom, upon which Brahma has been reborn. Vishnu's goddess consort Lakshmi tends to her beloved's weary feet and seated behind her, awaits the goddess of wisdom, arts and knowledge, Saraswati, the feminine counterpart to Brahma.

Many Armed, Dancing Ganesha
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 26.3 x 27.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0861]

This pattachitra depicts the widely celebrated and worshiped deity Ganesha in a dancing pose. The deity with distinctive elephant head and rotund belly is typically known as the remover of obstacles, bringer of good fortune, god of learning and patron of the arts and sciences. Prayer and offering is usually made to Ganesha before the commencement of any venture or undertaking, strengthening its chance of success or completion.

A man and woman are depicted in poses of obeisance to either side of Ganesha and could be representations of his deity parent-figures Shiva and Parvati. He holds aloft a sacred thread in the form of a serpent and he dances upon an open padma (lotus flower), which in Hinduism is typically emblematic of purity, divinity and spiritual enlightenment. Ganesha's mouse mount Dinka attends to the god at his feet. Some sources suggest that the tiny creature, often seen carrying the hefty deity, symbolises the denial of selfish or greedy urges as well as the overcoming of adversity with the blessing of Ganesha. The god holds in his lower right hand the broken half of one of his tusks. There are a few differing narratives as to how the tusk was broken, but one tells of how the sage Vyasa, composer of the epic poem The Mahabharata, asked that Ganesha transcribe the poem as he dictated. Ganesha agrees to undertake the task, with the stipulation that Vyasa recite the epic from start to finish without pause. The dictation begins, but midway through Ganesha's feather pen breaks. To ensure that the transcription remained uninterrupted Ganesha broke off the end of his tusk, which he then used as a pen to complete the project.

Matsya Slaying the Demon Shankhasura
mid-20th century, Odisha, India.
Opaque watercolour on cloth, 30.5 x 40.6 cm.
Bequest of RM & CH Berndt, Berndt Museum of Anthropology Collection [1994/0862]

This pattachitra depicts Matsya, first avatar of Vishnu battling the demon Shankhasura in the depths of the ocean. It is said that during the cosmic age when the earth was predominantly submerged by water, the demon Shankhasura stole the Vedas (scriptures) from the god Brahma. He entrenched himself in the depths of the vast ocean, thinking himself unreachable. The deity Vishnu, sustainer of the universe, took the form of the half-fish, half-man avatar Matsya, to delve beneath the waves, slay Shankhasura and retrieve the sacred Vedas.

Shankhasura can be seen emerging from his refuge within a large shankha shell, confronted by Matsya, who postures formidably, holding in each hand one of the four emblems of Vishnu – chakra (discus), padma (lotus), shankha (conch shell) and gada (mace).

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