



Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur

October 11, 2008 to January 4, 2009

From the thirteenth century to Indian independence in 1947, the Rathore dynasty reigned Marwar, a desert kingdom in northwest India. As members of the Hindu ruling elite known as the Rajputs, the Rathores' primary social responsibility was the protection of their kingdom and subjects. Many Rathore kings also nurtured distinctive schools of literature, music, and painting in their courts at Jodhpur and Nagaur.

At the heart of *Garden and Cosmos* are recently rediscovered paintings from the Rathore ancestral collection that have never been publicly exhibited. Unlike conventional Marwar paintings, they reveal the genius of artists who brilliantly evoked both this world and the heavens, created a unique monumental format for illustrated manuscripts, and tackled profound religious concepts never represented in Indian art.

Commissioned by three maharajas, each negotiating a different political and cultural landscape, the paintings embody the sensibilities of the garden or the cosmos. The pastel-colored images produced in the royal workshop of Bakhat Singh (reigned 1725–52) document the maharaja's sensuous delight in his opulent garden-palace. Artists working for the devout Maharaja Vijai Singh (reigned 1752–93) transformed the garden-palace scenes into idyllic settings for the *lila* (divine play) of the gods. Painting took a sublime turn under Maharaja Man Singh (reigned 1803–43), whose artists focused on evoking the nature of the cosmos and the metaphysics of yoga. Through the motifs of garden and cosmos, the paintings express the dynamic and evolving relationships among the local traditions, regional alliances, and cosmopolitan spheres that constituted Rathore kingship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their glorious color harmonies, inspired narrative strategies, and dazzling juxtapositions convey the passion of their royal patrons for both worldly and spiritual perfection.

The Origins of Jodhpur Court Painting

In the thirteenth century, the Rathores migrated to northwest India intent on establishing a kingdom. The clan gained a small foothold as protectors of townships in Marwar, an arid hilly territory on the edge of the Thar Desert. Over the following centuries, the Rathores expanded their territories and constructed a dynastic identity. By the seventeenth century, the clan leaders had become great kings (maharajas). They grew far more powerful than their kinsmen and also participated in a cosmopolitan court culture that extended over most of the Indian subcontinent.

For the Rathore rulers, the crucial turning point that elevated them from local authorities to great kings was their acceptance of Mughal sovereignty in 1564. The powerful and wealthy Mughal emperors, who reigned over most of India from 1526 to 1857, welcomed the Rathore leaders as high-ranking courtiers, imperial generals, and governors. Marriage alliances between Mughal emperors and Rathore princesses forged strong bonds among royal families. As a result, the authority and prestige of the maharajas increased both inside and outside Marwar.

These five paintings demonstrate the dramatic transformation of Jodhpur from a regional capital to a cosmopolitan center over the course of a few decades in the seventeenth century. They chart the development of a mature court style that remained rooted in local tastes while it visually articulated the maharajas' emerging identity as powerful, affluent, and sophisticated kings.



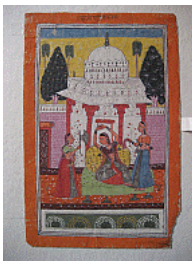
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Page from a Ragamala Series: Gujari Ragini
Marwar, Pali, dated 1623
Opaque watercolor on paper
National Museum of India, New Delhi, 83.209

The earliest surviving Marwar court paintings are visual interpretations of musical compositions. This image of a young maiden awaiting her lover in a forest bower evokes the melody Gujari. Holding a stringed vina, she sings and gestures to a peacock, a symbol of love and longing. The artist cleverly mingled the peacock's feathers and the tree's blossoms to evoke a world in which nature and romance are intertwined. Gujari Ragini epitomizes the richly colored, two-dimensional regional style from which later Jodhpur court painting developed.



Page from a Ragamala Series
Marwar, ca. 1660
Opaque watercolor on paper
National Museum of India, New Delhi, 54.58.28

Indian musical modes, known as ragas and raginis, are classified and described in groups called ragamalas (literally, garland of ragas). Desavarati ragini is traditionally likened to a lovesick woman who twists and stretches her arms overhead in yearning, as seen in this painting. These vibrant hues are typical of paintings created at the Deccan courts in central India. Jodhpur artists added bright yellows, pinks, and oranges to their darker regional palette (see second painting to left) after Maharaja Jaswant Singh, for whom this painting was made, served as a general for the Mughal Empire in the Deccan.



Maharaja Gaj Singh I
Mughal, ca. 1630–38; border, 18th century
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
The British Museum, London, Add. 1920.9-17.013 (14)

Maharaja Gaj Singh I, who ruled Marwar from 1619 to 1638, was one of the most successful generals and highest-ranking courtiers of the Mughal Empire. Imperial artists produced several refined portraits of the Marwar ruler in the subtly colored and naturalistic style of the Mughal atelier. They fittingly depicted the honored general with opulent jewel encrusted weapons. An enormous red gem, quite possibly an imperial gift in recognition of outstanding service, hangs from Gaj Singh's double-strand pearl necklace.



Maharaja Jaswant Singh I at a Music Performance during a Monsoon
Jodhpur, ca. 1670
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 1980 AS 28-1980

By the late seventeenth century, the Jodhpur maharajas' passion for gardens emerged as a recurring theme in royal portraiture. Here, amid dense greenery, colorful flower beds, and textiles adorned with blossoming motifs, Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (reigned 1638–78) enjoys an evening of music.

This painting combines the rich deep palette of local Marwar artworks, the Mughal genre of naturalistic portraiture, and the vibrant pinks and oranges of Deccani painting. The integration of styles epitomizes the cosmopolitanism of the Jodhpur maharajas, who spent their lives moving among their homeland, the imperial Mughal courts, and the far-flung regions they governed.



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Maharaja Ajit Singh and Sons during the Festival of Diwali
Jodhpur, 1721
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 1995.131

In the early eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire began to weaken. In 1721 Maharaja Ajit Singh was strong enough to wrest the city of Ajmer, the strategically important gateway to Rajasthan, from the Mughals. Ajit Singh here celebrates the conquest of Ajmer with his sons. A few years later, the princes Abhai (top) and Bakhat (second from top) joined forces to murder their father in a deadly play for power.

Royal Pastimes at Nagaur Palace

Gardens for Royal Pleasure

Maharaja Bakhat Singh

Bakhat Singh was a brave general and an exemplary ruler, but his reputation was permanently stained when he murdered his father, Maharaja Ajit Singh, in 1724 for political gain. His elder brother, who succeeded to the throne of Marwar, granted young Bakhat the territory and fortress of Nagaur, located eighty-five miles northeast of Jodhpur, as a reward for carrying out the heinous deed.

The Mughals (1526–1857) were the Indian subcontinent's political and cultural authority when Bakhat Singh rebuilt Nagaur palace in the imperial Mughal style. Gardens with geometric flower beds linked white pavilions adorned with delicate foliate designs. Cloth canopies, shade trees, and abundant water flowing through channels, pools, and fountains transformed the arid desert palace into an idyllic garden paradise.

During Bakhat Singh's reign at Nagaur (1725–51), his atelier developed a sensuous garden-palace aesthetic. Painters eloquently conveyed the maharaja's pride in the opulent oasis he created by accurately depicting palace architecture, working in an unusually large format, and employing a bright palette reminiscent of a garden in full blossom. In 1751, after a brief quarter-century reign at Nagaur, Bakhat Singh acceded to the throne of all Marwar. Ironically, his niece poisoned him the following year in retribution for the murder of Ajit Singh, her grandfather.



Amusements on a Moonlit Water Terrace
Nagaur, ca. 1729–32
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1981

Beneath a full moon, a young beauty coyly engages Bakhat Singh's attention by drawing her veil before her face, while he tugs at the tie of her skirt.

Arranged on the moonlit terrace are the luxury objects of the refined Rathore court, including a small blue-and-white container of Chinese or Dutch origin. Beverages cool in a large silver tub, and gold dishes hold pan (a savory wrapped in betel leaf) and mangoes. An attendant on the right carries a longnecked water vessel and matching golden basin for washing the maharaja's hands.



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Celebration of Holi in a Garden Pavilion
Attributed here to the "Nagaur Master"
Nagaur, ca. 1729–32
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2033

In the midst of a raucous celebration of the springtime festival of Holi, Bakhat Singh and a favorite embrace in a haze of yellow powder. Palace women playfully spray colored water from golden pichkaris (syringes) or smear powdered pigments on each other. Several drink bhang, an intoxicating beverage, or add to the merriment by beating on drums and singing Holi songs. Translucent splashes of magenta and saffron contribute to the sense of joyous abandon.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh Worshipping Krishna
Attributed here to the "Nagaur Master"
Nagaur, ca. 1730–35
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1971

While he was in Nagaur, Bakhat Singh renovated a Hindu temple dedicated to the deity Krishna. Here, during the ceremony celebrating the god's birthday (Janmashtami), the young maharaja wears a prayer cap with a tilak (a sandalwood-paste mark of devotion) on his forehead. Krishna, adorned with his characteristic crown of peacock feathers, and his consort Radha are represented as fully present.

In the eighteenth century, Krishna became increasingly important to Hindu rulers. This painting, however, is the only one from Nagaur that depicts Bakhat Singh worshipping the deity.



Musical Merriment for Maharaja Bakhat Singh and Prince Vijai Singh
Attributed here to the "Nagaur Master"
Nagaur, ca. 1736
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2028

Whether performing concerts or leading processions, musicians were central to court life at Nagaur. Here, beneath the gathering monsoon clouds, female musicians provide the tempo for a yellow-robed dancer who entertains Bakhat Singh and his young son and successor Vijai. The cusped arches of the courtyard's rear wall open onto a garden (left), but they are partially enclosed by stone screens carved in delicate filigree (right). This rhythmic alternation between open and closed spaces characterizes the garden pavilion architecture of Nagaur.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh Watches a Dance Performance at the Bakhat Singh Mahal
Attributed here to "Artist 2"
Nagaur, ca. 1737
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2610

Maharaja Bakhat Singh holds a flower to enhance his senses as he watches a slim young dancer move her feet to the beat of cymbals and a double-headed drum.

The garden aesthetic permeates the scene. Everyone in attendance wears garments the color of blossoms and leaves. Scrolling vines and gemstone flowers cover the ruler's gold throne, and delicate floral patterns adorn the palace walls. Traces of the green acanthus leaf decoration on the columns are still visible today at Nagaur.



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Maharaja Bakhat Singh at the Jharokha Window of the Bakhat Singh Mahal
Attributed here to "Artist 2"
Nagaur, 1737
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2031

Paintings of Nagaur express Bakhat Singh's pride in his palaces and their opulent comforts. Here, female entertainers delight the thirty-one-year-old ruler, who sits within an elegant two-story palace.

The artist carefully documented the building's structure and its foliate designs (see photo below) by employing multiple perspectives to make its architectural elements clearly visible. For example, the brackets supporting the lower balcony are realized in one-point perspective, but the entrance stairs are shown in a flat side view. By relocating Bakhat Singh's viewing (jharokha) window from the interior to the front, the painter rendered both maharaja and palace as equally glorious.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh Delights in an Outdoor Musical Performance
Attributed here to the "Nagaur Master"
Nagaur, 1737
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1991

A sensuous mood prevails as Bakhat Singh and court women enjoy a musical performance under the setting sun. Three pairs of ducks mating in the octagonal pool suggest the evening will conclude with more intimate encounters between the maharaja and his favorites.

In their paintings, court artists always represented the palace as a haven from political turmoil. This ordered and tranquil scene was painted in 1737, the very year Bakhat Singh quelled a foreign invasion of the Nagaur region.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh Watches Elephants Wreaking Havoc
Nagaur, ca. 1740
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2032

Bakhat Singh enjoyed staging combats between elephants—symbols of sovereignty, power, and wealth—at Nagaur. Here, handlers use lances and fireworks in a frantic attempt to control two frenzied beasts that have broken away. In the melee, men lose their turbans as they scramble into trees for safety.

Thirty women, partially hidden behind sixteen windows covered with woven screens, observe the excitement from the zenana, the women's section of the palace. Along the pink wall, two eunuchs (identifiable by their lack of facial hair) calmly guard the entrances to the zenana.



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Maharaja Bakhat Singh Revels in a Pleasure Boat Ride
Attributed here to the "Nagaur Master"
Nagaur, ca. 1745–48
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2030

Produced during a severe drought in the desert region of Nagaur, this painting reveals that royal reservoirs and their pleasure pavilions remained idyllic oases in the dry, dusty countryside. Here, soldiers guard a white tent erected as a portable zenana space for the women enjoying a day's outing.

Although the lush garden is almost impossibly bright, the pace of activities feels relaxed. Animal-headed boats rowed by female "gondoliers" glide smoothly through the lotus-filled tank. Musicians serenade Bakhat Singh (the only male within the cloth enclosure), while queens companionably converse and servants gather garden flowers for fragrant garlands.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh and Zenana Women Savor the Moonlight Evening
Attributed here to "Artist 3"
Nagaur, ca. 1748–50
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1987

Court paintings typically portray Rajput queens as idealized reflections of the king's virtue and virility. Here, queens, consorts, and female servants focus their unwavering attention on Bakhat Singh, who relaxes on a moonlit palace terrace. Royal women played significant political and social roles not represented in paintings. Their marriages cemented diplomatic ties between noble families, and they produced heirs, fulfilled religious obligations, built temples, and commissioned civic structures, such as water tanks. Some were influential advisors at court, while others were accomplished authors.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh Rejoices during Holi
Attributed here to "Artist 3"
Nagaur, ca. 1748–50
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1986

A favorite activity during Holi, the joyous Hindu festival that welcomes spring, is throwing color on one another. Surrounded by beauties in an octagonal pool, the bare-chested Bakhat Singh raises a golden pichkari (syringe) to spray colored water on a companion. Sacks of powdered pigment and green-leaf funnels lie scattered around the terrace.

Bedchambers on either side of the pool emphasize the scene's erotic overtones. The floral pattern on the bedspread at left appears frequently in paintings from this time, and it enlivens the embroidered tent canopy at the exhibition's entrance.



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Gardens for Divine Play

Maharaja Vijai Singh

Raised by his father Bakhat Singh in Nagaur, Maharaja Vijai Singh ruled Marwar from its capital city of Jodhpur from 1752 to 1793. These were turbulent decades. As the great Mughal Empire weakened, armies invaded the territory and ambitious noblemen challenged the authority of former imperial allies, such as the Rathore maharajas. Vijai Singh maintained power by forging alliances with neighboring rulers who shared his passionate devotion to the Hindu deities Vishnu, Rama, and Krishna. He publicly proclaimed his devotion by building two grand Krishna temples and outlawing meat and liquor. He even decreed that cowherds in Marwar be respectfully addressed as jagirdars (lords of territory), because Krishna had once tended cattle on earth.

Vijai Singh's atelier created monumental manuscripts to illustrate the divine and spontaneous play (lila) of Rama and Krishna within lushly blooming landscapes. Unlike small paintings, which were held in the viewer's hand, these oversized folios probably were held aloft for others to see while related verses were sung or recited. They often depict gardens and palaces in the rich pastel colors employed during Bakhat Singh's reign (1725–52), but Vijai Singh's artists expanded and transformed the Nagaur setting into celestial realms or sacred landscapes. Ambitious and innovative, the paintings express an ethos of kingship rooted equally in the maharaja's ardent religiosity and the political landscape of the late eighteenth century.



The rajas (kings) of Marwar-Jodhpur, a desert kingdom in northwest India, spent most of their lives away from their great forts and palaces. While traveling on military campaigns, religious pilgrimages, and pleasure jaunts, they lived within impressive tent encampments. Elaborately embroidered tents and other luxury textiles gave these cloth palaces the magic and splendor of royal residences.

This canopy is exceptional for its decoration of scrolling vines with fantastic blossoms and palmettes. When it was raised above similarly embroidered wall panels, the room became a virtual garden. The exuberant foliate pattern epitomizes the garden aesthetic of the Marwar-Jodhpur court. The white-ground pattern was particularly popular at the court of Maharaja Bakhat Singh (reigned 1725–52), for whom this tent may have been made. Carpets, bedspreads, and even palace walls were adorned with such floral designs.



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Vishnu and Lakshmi in Their Heavenly Palace
Attributed to the “Nagaur Master” or a close follower
Nagaur or Jodhpur, ca. 1755–60
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1822

These images of Hindu deities enthroned within celestial courts were painted approximately two decades apart. They demonstrate how Vijai Singh’s artists expanded upon the legacy of secular court scenes commissioned by his father, Maharaja Bakhat Singh.

In the smaller and earlier painting, the great Hindu deity Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, are enthroned within a heavenly palace closely modeled on Nagaur architecture. Vishnu (in his white form) carries his characteristic conch shell and discus, but he also delicately savors a blossom’s fragrance as if he were an earthly monarch.

The larger painting dramatically magnifies Nagaur palace architecture and its earthly pleasures to convey the grand court of the blue-skinned Rama and his wife Sita. Hundreds of celestial women serve the divine couple, who are depicted three times. Rama’s perfect reign provided a significant archetype for Vijai Singh and other eighteenth-century Hindu kings confronting the decline of Mughal cultural authority.

Krishna’s Enchanted Grove

Vijai Singh’s passionate attachment to the deity Krishna surfaces spectacularly in the illustrated Krishna Lila, which recounts the lila (play) of the blue god in a magically beautiful grove. Artists may have conceived this first monumental manuscript to satisfy the maharaja’s yearning to experience the bliss of Krishna’s lila. The horizontal unfurling of forest and river across each folio invites the viewer’s immersion into Krishna’s enchanting world.

The lila begins when Krishna’s captivating flute music lures gopis (female cowherds) from their homes. The composition sharply juxtaposes the women’s domestic sphere with a dreamlike expanse of foliage thick with parrots and egrets. This visual contrast emphasizes the gopis’ devotion, for they reject social convention (and the entreaties of their menfolk, at center) in favor of intense engagement with Krishna. In the second folio, Krishna satisfies each gopi’s longing by generously multiplying himself. The slender gopis, garbed in the colors of flowers, languidly entwine their bodies around blossoming trees or embrace the gently smiling god, who appears nine times in the grove.

During the lila, Krishna playfully disappears. The third folio depicts the bereft gopis seeking their beloved. As they search, they think increasingly about Krishna. Their transformation from self-absorbed sorrow to blissful focus sets an example for devotees.



The Gopis Leave the Village to Meet Krishna
Jodhpur, India, ca. 1765
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2157



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Krishna Frolics with the Gopi Girls
Jodhpur, India, ca. 1765
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2149

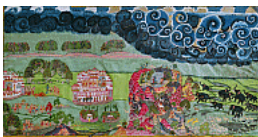


The Gopis Search for Krishna
Jodhpur, India, ca. 1765
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2150



Monkeys and Bears in the Kishkindha Forest From the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas (1532–1623)
Jodhpur, ca. 1775
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2532

The fanciful landscape perfectly captures the poet Tulsidas' affectionate observation of monkey antics. Scampering monkeys and langurs clamber up trees, gambol across hills, and care for their young, while bear families companionably converse in more sedate fashion. Herons, with long curved necks, float lightly amid the cloud tufts and coils of the blue sky.



Death of Vali; Rama and Lakshmana Wait out the Monsoon from the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas (1532–1623)
Jodhpur, ca. 1775
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2534

When his beloved wife Sita is kidnapped by a demon, Rama travels the subcontinent in search of her. One day the blue skinned deity arrives at an enchanted kingdom of talking monkeys and forges an alliance with the deposed monkey-king. The painter portrayed important characters several times to convey the rapid succession of events after Rama kills Vali, the usurper of the monkey-king's throne. On the left, for example, the red-skirted Queen Tara raises her hands in grief as she learns of Vali's defeat. She later stands by his funeral pyre at the river's edge.

At right, elephants playfully trumpeting beneath magnificent rain-laden clouds signal the arrival of the monsoon season. Rama and his loyal brother Lakshmana settle into a silver cavern in a gloriously colored mountain (center) to await the dry season, when they will resume their search for Sita.



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Rama's Army Crosses the Ocean to Lanka From the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas (1532–1623)

Jodhpur, ca. 1775
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2548

This fantastic and energetic landscape anticipates the fierce battle between the hero-god Rama and the demon-king Ravana to free the abducted Sita and to establish harmony on earth. Clouds tumble and banners flap as the embodiments of good and evil (in the upper left and right corners, respectively) observe the ocean passage between India and Sri Lanka.

Rama's exuberant armies rush to Ravana's island fortress across the pink boulder bridge they have constructed. Two prancing monkeys carry the confident Rama and his brother Lakshmana on their backs. Some monkeys scampers with their arms raised in pure glee, while others hitch rides on the backs of friendly makaras (alligator-like creatures) or swim and splash in the water.



Sarayu Palace From the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas (1532–1623)

Jodhpur, ca. 1775
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2594

These images of Hindu deities enthroned within celestial courts were painted approximately two decades apart. They demonstrate how Vijai Singh's artists expanded upon the legacy of secular court scenes commissioned by his father, Maharaja Bakhat Singh.

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Sage Markandeya's Ashram and the Milky Ocean

Folio 5 from the Durga Charit
Attributed to the Durga Master
Jodhpur, ca. 1780–90
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1700

This remarkable work brings together garden and cosmos, the distinctive hallmarks of painting at the Marwar-Jodhpur court. In the verdant hermitage on the left, a bearded sage eases the suffering of a deposed king and a poor merchant by revealing the world is mere illusion (maya). He then describes how the universe is periodically covered with a vast ocean on which the deity Vishnu sleeps (right). The leap from the natural world to the cosmic stage is echoed in the dramatic visual contrast between the pastel landscape and the dark swirling waters.

The folio is from a sacred Hindu text that relates the goddess Durga's victories over demons. The rulers of Marwar-Jodhpur worshiped the goddess and appealed to her for strength in battle.



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Maharaja Man Singh and the Naths

Kingdom and Cosmos

Maharaja Man Singh

When Maharaja Vijai Singh died in 1793, his heir apparent, Man Singh, was a vulnerable orphan. A ruthless uncle usurped the throne and for ten years sought to eliminate the young prince. Man Singh finally surrendered in 1803. As he prepared to leave his refuge, the prince received a prophetic message from a Nath mahasiddha (an immortal ascetic with godlike powers) to delay his surrender. Whether by miraculous or worldly intervention, the malevolent uncle died within days. Man Singh sped to the fort at Jodhpur, claimed the throne, and ruled for forty years.

In Marwar, mahasiddhas—and the Nath ascetics who emulated them through the practice of hatha yoga—had long been respected for their wondrous powers, which ranged from healing the sick to transforming fledgling princes into powerful kings. The Nathas, however, were not part of the Brahmin religious establishment that had supported previous maharajas. Man Singh nevertheless dedicated his kingdom to the mahasiddha Jalandharnath and transformed the yogic order into a state-sponsored religion. Because the maharaja gave them unwavering support and a fifth of the kingdom's annual revenue, and because their reputed supernatural powers inspired fear as well as respect, the Nathas became the unrivaled powerbrokers of Marwar.

Man Singh's expanded atelier proclaimed Nath greatness and teachings in hundreds of paintings and six monumental manuscripts. The small works in this gallery not only express the maharaja's devotion and justify his Nath-graced sovereignty, but they also hint at some of the strenuous opposition caused by his unusual coalition with the Nathas.

Nathji, Your Gaze is Poison...

—from a Marwar folk song

Man Singh's first guru, Dev Nath (died 1815), was apparently wise and benevolent, but later Nathas were increasingly corrupt. Most Rathore noblemen and the political agents of the British East India Company, who increasingly inserted themselves into state dealings, reviled Nath influence on the maharaja. Folk tales, local songs, and British correspondence recount abductions by the Nathas and their harassment of the population. For years, Man Singh protected the Nathas and used them to deflect British penetration into the kingdom's affairs. Ultimately, however, the maharaja was unable to sustain this double maneuver.

In 1843 the British arrested two prominent Nathas for kidnapping a Brahmin girl. Unable to secure their release and concerned for his own salvation, the maharaja left the palace in protest. He removed his royal raiment, smeared his body with ash, and lived as an ascetic in a wretched tent outside the city. A few weeks later he died of a summer fever.

After Man Singh's death, Nath revenues were drastically reduced and their leaders were exiled. Their temples fell into disrepair, their teachings were forgotten, and the monumental manuscript paintings were stored away.



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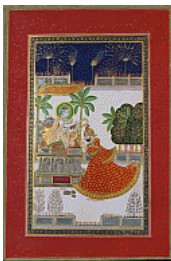
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The Rajtilak Darbar of Maharaja Man Singh
Amardas Bhatti, ca. 1804
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 4770

On January 19, 1804, Marwar's noblemen gathered at Mehrangarh Fort for Man Singh's coronation. This painting captures the pivotal moment in the ceremony when the forehead mark of sovereignty was applied to the new maharaja's forehead.

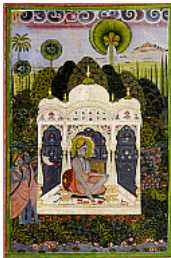
The grandeur and conviction of the painting unravel at the lower left border. Damaged by water and never completed, it was undoubtedly unwanted by late 1804, when many prominent noblemen left Jodhpur to rally around an infant pretender to the throne.



Jalandharnath and Maharaja Man Singh on Diwali
Shivdas Bhatti, ca. 1820–before 1825
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 4050

In 1803, as Man Singh prepared to surrender the Jalore fort—and by implication his life—to the reigning maharaja of Marwar, a prophecy advised him to wait a few days until Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. He did so, and when the ruthless maharaja died suddenly and unexpectedly, Man Singh assumed the throne.

This composition commemorates the 1803 miracle of Diwali. Jalandharnath, who is represented as fully present in the courtyard to express Man Singh's belief in his grace, bestows a shawl upon the maharaja. Golden candelabras, oil lamps (dipas), fireworks, and the flame pattern on Man Singh's garment all refer to Diwali.



Jalandharnath at Jalore
Amardas Bhatti, ca. 1805–10
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 4126

Maharaja Man Singh was devoted to the immortal ascetic Jalandharnath. Here, Jalandharnath—who can be recognized by his ash-covered skin, large kundal earrings, and halo—meditates in the rosy light of early evening. Attended by two young disciples, he is graced by heaven-sent golden flowers. The luxuriant garden, delicate pavilion, and deep-pastel palette reveal that the eighteenth-century Nagaur aesthetic endured into the early years of Man Singh's reign.



Jalandharnath and Princess Padmini Fly over King Padam's Palace
Folio 19 from the Suraj Prakash
Amardas Bhatti, 1830
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1644

In 1830, Man Singh commissioned the first illustrated history of the Rathore dynasty, the *Suraj Prakash*. More than half of its eighty folios depict obscure princes who were transformed into powerful rulers by divine grace. The manuscript's tales of divinely sanctioned kingship prefigure Man Singh's miraculous accession.

Here, the twelfth-century King Padam sports with his queens in a lotus-filled palace pool. The mahasiddha Jalandharnath flies through the sky with Padmini, a Sri Lankan princess who drops her golden bracelet to Padamas a token of love. Later in the narrative, Padam conquers a kingdom and wins the princess with Jalandharnath's blessing.



Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur

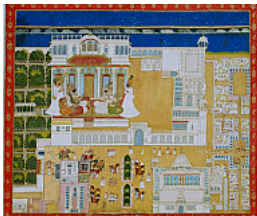
October 11, 2008 to January 4, 2009



Prince Subuddhi in the Forest of Illusion
Folio 35 from the Suraj Prakash
Amardas Bhatti, 1830
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 1660

To test the bravery of a twelfth-century ancestor of the Rathores, the deity Virbhadrā (a fierce form of Shiva) created a terrifying forest. Flying skulls spew fire around the prince, while other demons ride bloated animal carcasses on a torrential river of blood. Although his white horse has died from fright (center), the fearless Prince Subuddhi merely laughs.

The artist Amardas created a uniquely gruesome landscape, but he based the valiant Subuddhi's profile and garments on portraits of Maharaja Jaswant Singh (reigned 1638–78). The visual reference to Jaswant Singh signals Rathore authority and links distant ancestors to more recent history.



Maharaja Man Singh and Dev Nath at Mahamandir Haveli
Jodhpur, ca. 1810
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2024

Man Singh began constructing Mahamandir (literally, great temple) just outside Jodhpur in the second year of his reign. A symbolic and economic resource for the Nathas, it included a temple to Jalandharnath (lower right), the mansion (haveli) of Man Singh's guru (upper left), one thousand homes, and a flourishing bazaar.

An intimate meeting between Man Singh and his spiritual and political advisor Dev Nath in the latter's mansion lies at the heart of this painting. The artist subtly conveyed the guru's higher status by depicting him seated comfortably against cushions, ever so slightly higher than the maharaja.



Jalandharnath Worship at Mahamandir
Raso and Shivdas Bhatti
Jodhpur, ca. 1812
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2005

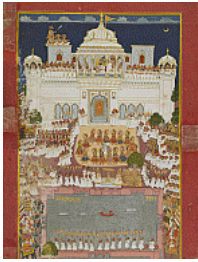
Court intrigues and murder lie just below the surface of two paintings representing worship at Jodhpur's gleaming Nath temples. On the immediate left, Man Singh humbly bows to Jalandharnath, as his guru Dev Nath ceremonially waves a peacock feather whisk above the mahasiddha's head. A few years later in 1815, Dev Nath was murdered by Rathore noblemen resentful of his power. Grieving and politically weakened, Man Singh abdicated.

The painting on the far left records a tense reconciliation among members of the ruling elite after Man Singh returned to the throne in 1818. As women dance in the lower courtyard, Man Singh sits among the nobles responsible for the assassination of his beloved guru. Shortly after the celebration, Man Singh killed one of the traitorous nobles, and the others fled Jodhpur. Man Singh's artists, like those of his great-grandfather Bakhat Singh, employed multiple perspectives to depict with accuracy the architectural elements of the main structures. However, they drew upon construction plans to represent outlying structures and streets schematically.



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Maharaja Man Singh Celebrates Gangaur at Nijmandir
Satidas
Jodhpur, March/April 1820
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2007

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Ganesha, Saraswati, and Jalandharnath
Identified here as a copy of folio 1 from the Nath Purana
Attributed to Amardas, ca. 1825
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2398

Man Singh's prodigiously productive atelier created three hundred fifty monumental folios for six Nath-related manuscripts. This folio represents Ganesha (left), the remover of obstacles, and Saraswati (center), the goddess of knowledge, who are regularly invoked at the beginning of Hindu manuscripts. Befitting the opening folio of a text narrated by amahasiddha (great perfected being), the rolling landscape also includes immortal Nath ascetics (right) within a bucolic hermitage.

The three vignettes offer extraordinary passages of painting, from the dainty mottling of Ganesha's ear and the delicate feathers of Saraswati's swan to the relaxed alertness of the yogins.

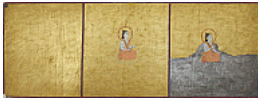
The Origins of the Cosmos

Since the emergence of the Nath religious tradition in the twelfth or thirteenth century, Nath mahasiddhas (great perfected beings) have sought to reveal the mystery of existence. At the core of their teachings is the Absolute—an all-encompassing and transcendent essence from which the universe emerges. This profound conception, which has many names but is most often known as Brahman, is central to many Hindu philosophical and religious traditions. South Asian artists rarely attempted to represent Brahman. Instead, they focused on depicting deities with knowable forms who served as accessible intermediaries or portals to the Absolute for worshipers. Man Singh's artists, however, rose to the challenge of conveying the undifferentiated and self-luminous Brahman. They evoked the Absolute with solid fields of shimmering gold pigment, creating paintings that were paradoxically both luxurious and immaterial. The luminous abstraction epitomizes the atelier's aesthetic of the sublime.



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Three Aspects of the Absolute
Identified here as folio 1 from the Nath Charit
Bulaki, 1823
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2399

In Hindu philosophy, the eternal essence of the universe is always defined by what it is not (without form, without origin, without color, etc.). Man Singh's artists met the challenge of depicting Absolute reality by employing undifferentiated fields of gold pigment. The abstraction is an innovation of the Jodhpur atelier.

Bulaki represents the Absolute as it comes into being. The left field of gold evokes the self-luminous Absolute. At center, a mahasiddha (great perfected being) embodies the first manifestation of the cosmos into subtle form. On the right, a mahasiddha exuding silvery light (jyoti) produces the next, more material level of creation.



The Emergence of Spirit and Matter
Folio 2 from the Shiva Purana
Attributed to Shivdas, ca. 1828
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2599

In the Shiva Purana, the deity Brahma describes the transcendental nature of the Absolute:

When the present world is not in existence, the Absolute (Sat Brahman) alone is present. It is incomprehensible to the mind [and] cannot be expressed by words. It has neither name nor color. . . . It is immeasurable, propless, unchanging, formless, without attributes, perceptible to Yogins, all-pervasive, and the sole cause of the universe.

Luminous fields of gold evoke the ineffable Absolute in this painting. The center and right panels represent the emergence of Consciousness (Purusha) and Matter (Prakriti) as resplendently crowned male and female deities.



The Creation of the Cosmic Ocean and the Elements
Folio 3 from the Shiva Purana
Attributed to Shivdas, ca. 1828
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2600

The cosmos continues to emerge with dreamlike intensity in the Shiva Purana's third folio. From left to right, Consciousness (Purusha) and Matter (Prakriti) create the cosmic waters, the twenty-four elements (such as the senses) essential to experience, and the slumbering Vishnu.

As Vishnu sleeps, a magnificent lotus quivers from his navel into an extravagant bloom. Brahma, the four-headed god of creation, emerges from the splendid lotus in a state of utter bewilderment. Voicing the fundamental questions of existence, Brahma asks, "Where have I come from? Who is my creator?"



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Nathji Creates the Earth's Sacred Waters
Folio 4 from the Nath Charit, 1823
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2429

far left

Many Nath teachings are framed as discourses to Hindu deities. In the shimmering panel to the far left, a celestial mahasiddha (great perfected being) emitting silver light explains creation. The greatest gods listen respectfully, but several overawed minor deities fall from the heavens as they try to swim in or row upon the radiance.

In the next panel, the mahasiddha creates the sacred rivers of India. The visual similarity between the cosmic radiance (left) and earth's rivers is significant because equivalences between subtle and gross matter are central to Nath teachings. They provide the pathways through which yogic adepts transmute their mortal bodies into immortal essence.

left

Nathji Creates the Ganges
Folio 8 from the Nath Purana
Attributed to Shivdas, ca. 1825
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2405

In South Asia, footprints have been a sacred symbol for millennia. Hindu deities worship the footprints of Nathji (literally, glorious lord) within the universe's highest realm. In turn, Nathji blesses the gods with the sacred river Ganges, a sinuous, silver streak flowing from his golden footprints.

On the right, the painter exploited the hypnotic potential of repetitive forms by depicting scores of seated Nath mahasiddhas bathed in a liquid field of Ganges water.



Chakras of the Subtle Body
Folio 2 from the Nath Charit
Attributed to Bulaki, 1823
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2427

Cartilage-piercing earrings, shoulder-length jata (dreadlocks), and an ash-covered body identify this massive figure as a Nath. With eyes crossed in inward meditation, he stands in the yogic posture tadasana.

Through hatha yoga practice, Naths seek to transform their bodies into sublime matter. This process takes place through the chakras (energy centers) of the subtle body, the mediating space between gross matter and the Absolute. Different yoga treatises describe between six and fourteen chakras. In this luminous subtle body, the upper energy centers are the realms of Nath mahasiddhas, while the lower ones are associated with Hindu deities.



Nathji Creates the Ganges
Attributed to Shivdas
India, ca. 1828
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2405 0



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Mapping the Cosmos

The paintings in this section are maps that draw upon the immense body of cosmographic conceptions that developed in South Asia over millennia. They illustrate texts that relate to the Naths, a religious order whose adepts gained immortality and omniscience through the practice of hatha yoga.

As maps, the folios meticulously establish spatial relationships among multiple worlds, celestial landmarks, divinities, and the human body. They also demonstrate how enlightened Naths situate themselves at the apex of the universe and how they visualize the equivalence of their bodies and the macrocosm.

With their glowing mineral pigments, abundant gilding, and elegant precision, the paintings transform the cartographic into the shimmering aesthetic of the court. Dramatic shifts between the miniature and the gigantic, radically juxtaposed perspectives, and vibrating color harmonies evoke an awe-inspiring cosmos.



The Mandala of Shiva
Folio 8 from the Shiva Rahasya
Jodhpur, 1827
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2714

A mandala is a symbolic diagram of the infrastructure of the cosmos. This mandala reveals the deity Shiva (depicted three times within his gold walled palace on Mount Kailash) to be the supreme deity at the universe's center and apex.

Six continents and seven oceans—represented as green and silver ribbons—circle Shiva's mountain abode. The universe's seven heavens and seven underworlds, stacked in an unusual zigzag formation, flank the oval earth-island.

The hallucinatory palette is visionary. Acid-green continents vibrate against silver oceans, crimson-tipped golden mountains glow, and mauve sunsets glimmer portentously.



The Mandala of Great Ether (Mahakasha Mandala)
Folio 7 from the Nath Charit
Attributed to Bulaki, ca. 1825
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2404

This cosmic blueprint centers upon an egg-shaped earth ringed by concentric island-continents. The side and top panels vertically depict the cosmos. On the right, seven netherworlds of snakes, demons, and gods rise above Sheshnag, the serpent who bears the entire universe on his many heads. Gods, sages, and ascetics dwell in the heavens on the left.

The artist Bulaki reserved his finest painting for the mahasiddhas seated in the gold rectangle on the upper right. These celestial Naths (including Jalandharnath) preside over the realm of great ether, the most subtle, enduring, and supreme world in the cosmos.



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The Equivalence of Self and Universe
Folio 6 from the Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati
Bulaki, 1824
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2378

All beings embodied in the three worlds . . . exist in the body together with all their activities. He who knows all this is a yogin. There is no doubt about this.

- Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati of Gorakhnath (12th–13th century)

In the eleventh year of hatha yoga practice, the body and consciousness of a Nath yogin become one with the universe. This brilliantly conceived painting simultaneously represents blissful omniscience and maps the cosmos.

The universe's fourteen principal worlds are arrayed along the yogin's limbs in a vertical hierarchy from the heavens in his head to the netherworlds in his feet. Bulaki, a workshop master, cleverly transformed the sun and moon (the ha and tha of hatha yoga) into the yogin's cheeks, rolling clouds into a beard, and mountains into ear hair.

Yantras

Yantras are composed of triangles, circles, and squares that map divine identity as sacred geometry. Deceptively simple in form, their shapes, points, and interstices house the yantra's primary deity (usually a goddess) and myriad divine attendants or existential planes, such as consciousness.

With superbly nuanced color harmonies, these three yantras extend their cosmic geometry into expansive landscapes. The glassy white yantra is the underlying structure of a brilliantly lit mountain, blanketed in snow and speckled with lichens. Its gold-tipped trees have soft foliage clusters daubed by the painter's fingertips. In contrast, fantastically slender and wispy trees on verdant hills expand upon the celadon and chartreuse yantra. The pink yantra's glowing mountains are unusually glazed in translucent washes of crimson, peach, and ochre.

While yantras typically serve as tools for spiritual realization, they can also harness supernatural powers for worldly purposes. The pink yantra may have been designed to secure a military victory, because many of its male deities carry weapons.



White Yantra from the Meghmala
India, ca. 1825
Opaque watercolor on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2502



Green yantra from the Meghmala
India, ca. 1825
Opaque watercolor on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2503



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Pink Yantra from the Meghmala
India, ca. 19th century
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2504

Sacred Sites and Cosmic Oceans

Hindu philosophy understands the universe to be periodically destroyed and recreated. According to Nath teachings, mahasiddhas (great perfected beings) remain sentient during the intervals between creation, when the cosmos is covered with vast waters. These seven paintings, which are unlike any other Indian images and for which no related text has yet been found, may represent three Nath mahasiddhas during the state of cosmic dissolution.

The mahasiddhas hover above gently reverberating oceans. Each ocean is unique. Fields of saturated color swirl into oblong orange swells and small breakers, coil snakelike into circular pink eddies, or take on the density of lobed gray boulders. Other oceans have waves that are incised into the surface, raised with impasto, or delicately drawn as tremulous whorls.

In the Indian religious landscape, the gods are omnipresent. They manifest throughout the cosmos as mountains and sin-cleansing rivers and also graciously dwell within temples and shrines. The idyllic ashrams where celestial Naths practice hatha yoga are equally charged with the divine.

Nath manuscripts describe sacred sites at length in order to convey the pervasive presence and power of mahasiddhas (great perfected beings) throughout the cosmos. The Hindu deity Shiva also appears prominently because he is the archetypal yogin on whom Nath ascetics model their appearance and behavior.

Magically lush groves with starburst foliage, flashing silver rivers, and fancifully colored peaks pervade the monumental folios. Jodhpur artists emphasized the otherworldly intensity of these sacred landscapes through reverberating color harmonies, surface shine, and hypnotic repetition.



Shiva Temples
Folio 28 from the Shiva Rahasya, 1827
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2734

Rather than mundanely representing temples on earth, Man Singh's artists exploited optical effects to convey the sublime energy generated by the universe's devotion to Shiva. Here, multicolored shrines create a syncopated rhythm across the page, and serpentine rivers shimmer. The large format intensified the aesthetic potential of shine, as lifting the folio for viewing at court caused light to flicker across its burnished surface.



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The Mountains of the Eight Directions
Folio 17 from the Shiva Rahasya, 1827
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2729

Gods dwell on the summits of sacred mountains, and semidivine beings, sages, and enlightenment-seeking ascetics live on their flanks. Here, small white shrines perched atop eight peaks manifest Shiva's presence as lingams, a symbolic form of the deity. Meditating holymen and ash-smeared yogins—including one who performs penance by dangling upside down from a tree—inhabit each mountainside.

The artist's delightful palette tempers candy-colored mountains with craggy peaks of ochre and salmon. Twisting ribbons comprising a silver river, lime green riverbank, rosy pink fortress wall, and custard-colored hillocks animate the foreground.



Twelve Light-form Manifestations of Nathji
Folio 50 from the Nath Charit, 1823
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2475

Man Singh's artists frequently experimented with variations on celestial landscapes. A number of folios employ a grid to depict a multitude of shrines. In this folio's upper register, twelve Nath siddhas—recognizable from their triangular black hats, ash-white skin, and large, round earrings—worship in jewel-studded celestial shrines. Each siddha meditates upon Nathji's footprints of light, a particularly sublime manifestation of the cosmic essence. In the lower register, human devotees worship at the twelve Jyotir lingam (lingam of light) temples located on the Indian subcontinent.



The Practice of Yoga
Folio 5 from the Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati
Attributed to Bulaki, 1824
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2377

Very many Nath ascetics are praying, very many are meditating, having purified their hearts, very many hear and attain wisdom. . . in their hearts there is limitless sound, yet silence appears on their faces.

- From the Nath Chandrika by Man Singh's courtier Uttamchand Bhandari

A white walled city nestled improbably beneath its own patch of sky (on the right) signifies that this lush ashramis located within a celestial heaven, where mahasiddhas (great perfected beings) dwell in eternal bliss. The enlightened Nath at center compresses his nostril as he practices pranayama (breath control). Another meditates within a mountain cave, depicted as a pea-green hillock capped by pink boulders.



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Shiva Reveals the Geography of the Three Worlds to Parvati
Folio 13 from the Shiva Rahasya
Attributed to Vana Akhavat, 1827
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2719

In the Shiva Rahasya, the great god Shiva describes the boundaries, mountains, and rivers of the three worlds. He reveals this knowledge to the goddess Parvati from the terrace of a golden palace modestly tucked into the mountain on the folio's left. Shiva drapes one arm companionably over his wife's shoulders and, with his other arm, gestures to the valley that unfolds below.

The artist Vanamade the valley seem real by basing its representation on a routemap of the Himalayan foothills. Flashing silver rivers and gleaming white cities enliven the verdant terrain.



Shiva's Wedding Procession
Folio 17 from the Shiva Purana
Vana Akhavat, ca. 1828
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2612

This cheerful panorama represents Shiva's wedding procession to the mountaintop home of his bride, the goddess Parvati ("she of the mountain"). On the right, Parvati's mother, Queen Mena, stands on a palace balcony awaiting her first glimpse of the groom. When she sees the beautiful blue Vishnu and the stately four-headed Brahma leading the groom's party, she is delighted. But when she spies Shiva—with his skin white from cremation ground ash, adorned in snakes, and falling off his bullmount because he is intoxicated—she promptly faints. Happily, the divine groom later manifests a supremely beautiful form, and Mena blesses the union.

An Unsolved Mystery

Esoteric traditions, such as hatha yoga, often encode knowledge in double meanings and symbols. Each painting in this series features three Nath mahasiddhas raising one hand in the gesture of explication. They are arranged, perhaps meaningfully, in the inverted triangle that signifies the goddess in yantra diagrams (on view in the Mapping the Cosmos gallery).

The snake on the silver ocean (right) probably represents the coiled female energy (Kundalini Shakti) that yogins awaken to achieve omniscience. Most yogic symbols, however, have multiple associations. The number of paintings in the series, for example, may refer to the seven oceans of Indian cosmography or another septet entirely. Overpainting around every mahasiddha on the left indicates that a learned Nath oversaw the correction of the paintings during production. However, the symbolic code will remain unbroken until a corresponding text-or another equally learned Nath-is located.



Gray Om Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
Jodhpur, India, 1823 (Samvat 1880)
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2468



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Yellow Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
India, 1823 (Samvat 1880)
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2469



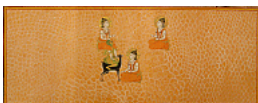
Pink Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
India, 1823 (Samvat 1880)
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2470



White Turtle Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
Jodhpur, India, d. 1823
Opaque watercolor on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2471



Gray Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
India, 1823 (Samvat 1880)
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2472



Orange Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
Jodhpur, India, d. 1823
Opaque watercolor on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2473



White Cosmic Ocean from the Nath Charit
Jodhpur, India, 1823 (Samvat 1880)
Opaque watercolor on paper
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2474



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CHRONOLOGY

1226

The Rathore clan establishes a kingdom in Marwar.

1459

Rao Jodha establishes Mehrangarh Fort and the walled city of Jodhpur (city of Jodha) as Marwar's capital.

1526

At Delhi, Babur establishes the Mughal Empire.

1564

The Rathore raja Udai Singh accepts imperial sovereignty after the Mughals conquer Jodhpur.

1600s

The Rathore rulers remain kings in Marwar while serving the empire as generals and governors; they are rewarded with the title and status of maharajas (great kings).

1700s

The Mughal Empire weakens.

1725–51

Maharaja Bakhat Singh rules Nagaur, a territory in northern Marwar.

1751–52

Maharaja Bakhat Singh succeeds to the throne of Marwar.

1752–93

Maharaja Vijai Singh rules Marwar.

1803–15

Maharaja Man Singh rules Marwar.

1818–43

Man Singh returns to the throne of Marwar after a three-year interregnum.

1858

British imperial rule of India is established.

1947

India gains its independence.