

Indian Garden Compliments British Museum's Jodhpur Exhibition

Visitors to the British Museum are welcomed by an Indian garden expertly transplanted from Kew Gardens to compliment the Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur Exhibition inside. Both exhibitions were extended to October 11th.



Scholars_tree



Himalayan blue poppy



Mango

The garden, with a sandy path featured plants used in food, and plenty of information about medicine, religion, construction, each plant, drew attention to the weaving and commerce. The rich variety of vegetation in the display demonstrated the global ecological and economic importance of this wildlife and natural resources they provide. Plants in India have traditionally been used in all aspects of everyday life. The landscape with many aspects of traditional Indian culture.

The Garden and Cosmos exhibition provided a once in the life-time chance to see 56 paintings from the royal collection of the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in Jodhpur, which have never been displayed in Europe.

They featured the unique art tradition that flourished in the royal courts between the 17th and 19th centuries. The paintings can be divided into two categories: those showing life in

the royal court (the garden) and paintings concerned with religion and philosophical speculation about the origin of the universe. The 'spiritual' paintings were commissioned by Maharaja Man Singh (1803 – 1843), and dealt with subjects never before tackled by Indian court painters. Among the most striking were a figure with the shimmering chakras (energy centres), mandalas (cosmic maps) and asanas (Yoga postures).





In other paintings Man Singh consults unearthly beings whom devotees credited with supernatural powers and immortality. He upset the social mores of the day by showing the Holy River Ganges springing not from Shiva's hair but from the flowing footprints of the deity Nathji.

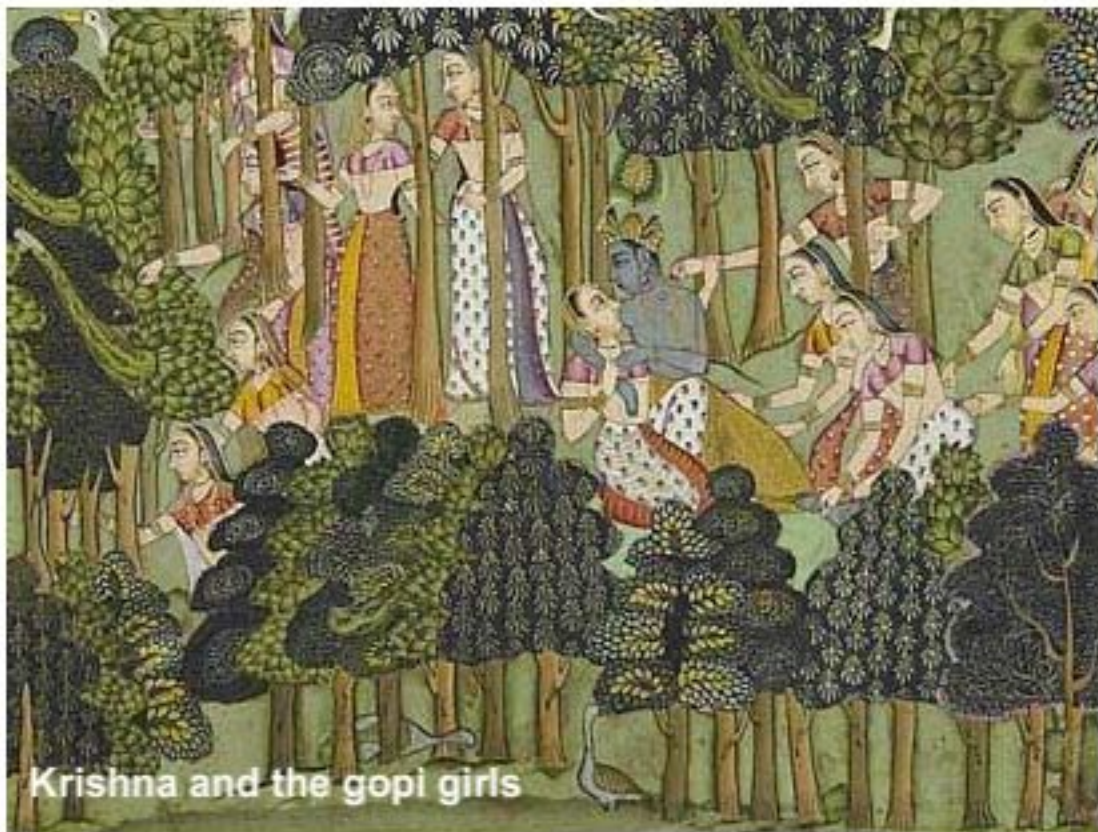
Bakhat Singh who ruled Marwar-Jodhpur, the largest of the former Rajput kingdoms (in the modern state of Rajasthan) was an exemplary ruler but his reputation was permanently stained when he murdered his

father in order to gain the throne of Nagaur. He transformed the once arid region into a garden paradise, rebuilt its palaces and introduced a sophisticated water-harvesting system. People lived like kings and kings lived like gods with jewels in their turbans, ropes of pearls draped around their necks, blossoms scenting their gardens and swimming pools large enough to float a fleet of pleasure craft. Eleven paintings show the architecture of the region and Singh's delight in opulent garden palaces.

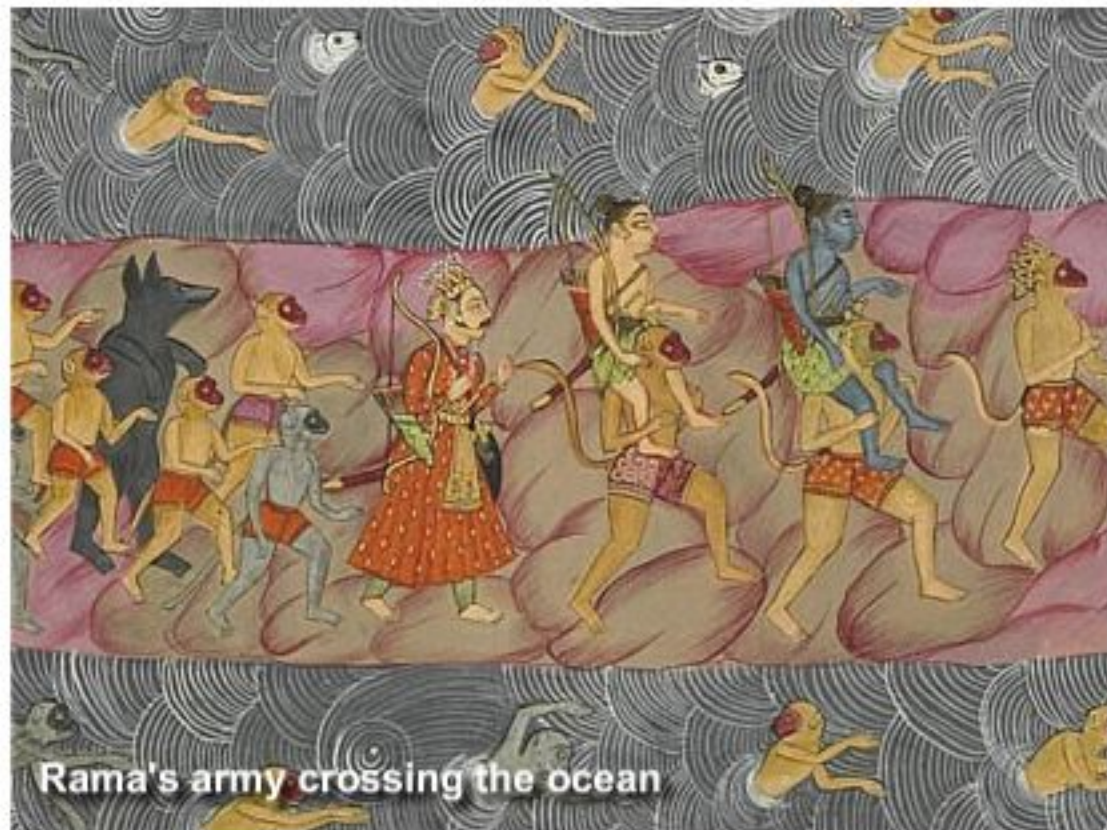
Bakhat Singh's son, Maharaja Vijai Singh, took the throne when his father was poisoned by a vengeful niece. He commissioned paintings which told the story of the exploits of Krishna, Rama and other Hindu gods. The expansive, sacred landscapes are like visual narratives which charm and delight. One of the paintings depicts Vishnu sleeping on a multi-headed serpent amid a sea

of black and silver billows, the cosmic ocean that existed before the creation of the universe.

The golden age of Marwari painting came to an end when the British colonialists forced Man Singh from power. He became a yogi and lived in a tent in Jodhpur. His paintings were locked away in a fort for two centuries and were only discovered recently.



Krishna and the gopi girls



Rama's army crossing the ocean

More than 50 of the works on display in Garden and Cosmos were lent by his Highness Gaj Singh II, the Maharaja of Marwar-Jodhpur, from the Mehrangarh Museum Trust. The 36th Maharaja of the Rathore clan of Jodhpur he is the recipient of the renowned Hadrian award from the World Monuments fund for his work on cultural and architectural preservation in Rajasthan and

currently serves on the Governing Council of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage. Selected paintings were loaned from the National Museum of India.

A wide range of activities: debates, interactive workshops, film screenings, food tastings as well as live music and dance performances were held in conjunction with the exhibitions.