



## Ragamala paintings – varied images from the Deccan

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Date of Submission: 01-05-2021

Date of Acceptance: 15-05-2021

**ABSTRACT:** This article focusses on the genre of miniature painting with special reference to Ragamala painting from the Deccan region of India. Ragamala painting is a special category within miniature paintings. The Indian *ragas* are musical modes which convey a certain mood. This has been captured in Ragamala paintings which literally translates as ‘garland of ragas’ or a string of musical modes. The Deccan region produced several paintings of the *ragas*; including *raginis* which are supposed to be the wives/females of the Indian *ragas*. The Deccani *ragamala* paintings are vibrant and the varied themes represent the mood it is supposed to depict as per the *raga* or *ragini*. While tracing the history of this category from the Deccan region the many examples in this article will make it clearer to recognize and appreciate aspects of this important genre of Indian painting.

**KEYWORDS:** Ragamala painting, Indian painting, miniature painting, Raga, Ragini, Deccan, Deccani painting, art history of India.

### I. INTRODUCTION :

*Ragamala or ‘garland of ragas’*

Indian painting is made up of murals, miniature paintings and modern Indian art if one classifies it broadly. The earliest paintings are from pre-historic sites like Bhimbhetka in Madhya Pradesh on rocks, believed to be over 10,000 years old. Murals are done on solid walls like the famous paintings in the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra. Miniature painting is done on a smaller scale for albums and books on palm-leaf, paper or cloth all of which are perishable. They are executed using natural substances like vegetables, minerals, indigo, conch shells, precious stones, gold and silver. This art form flourished during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century and faded by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest paintings to survive are from the Pala dynasty of East India; from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Illustrations are seen in Buddhist texts like the *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita*. In Western India the 12<sup>th</sup> century Jaina miniatures, mostly of the *Kalpa Sutra* have

survived. The 15<sup>th</sup> century illustrations of Hindu themes from Western India and 16<sup>th</sup> century from Eastern India have survived. Emperor Humayun had brought Persian artists for the Mughal atelier with him when he returned from exile in 1555. The Mughal miniature painting flourished under Emperor Akbar with illustrated translations of the Hindu epics into Persian. Also the feats, ceremonies and missions of the royals were documented by Mughal artists, the painting style which had heavy Persian influence. Many Indian styles were influenced by the Mughal school including Rajput, Pahari and Deccan.

In general miniature paintings have represented various themes which include *Krishna-leela*, *Nayikabheda*, royal lifestyles, scenes from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, *Barahmasa* relating to seasons, animals and flowers among others. Ragamala Paintings are a unique category within miniature paintings. Ragamala paintings form series of illustrative paintings based on the ‘garland of ragas’ or *Ragamala*, depicting various Indian musical modes, the *Ragas*. They are an amalgamation of art and classical music, which flourished during 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. With the introduction of paper royals and noblemen both Hindu and Muslim commissioned miniature painting including Ragamalas. Mughal Emperor Akbar too commissioned Ragamala paintings. It is pertinent to note that music has been part of the Indian ethos since yore. Drumbeats, cymbals, the sound of *shehnai* and conch blowing augur well at any ceremony. The *Natyashastra* of Bharata from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century is an early treatise on fine arts and describes Indian musical theory; also covers dance and drama[9].

Technically speaking a *raga* has been defined as ‘‘a permutation and combination of notes or frequencies illustrated by melodic movements which are capable of producing a pleasant sensation, mood or an emotion in the mind of the listener’’. There are six main *ragas* and each raga has five *raginis* or wives and 8 *ragaputras* or sons. The 6 main ragas are Bhairava, Dipaka, Sri, Malkauns, Megha and Hindola. Bhairava is depicted as a form



of Lord Shiva, Malkaunsa is a human lord and his raginis are thought to be dyed in the colour of love. Raga Hindola is depicted by a swing usually with Lord Krishna with consort with attendants and there might be rain happening in the background. Raga Dipaka is associated with fire and light. Raga Sri is named after Goddess Lakshmi and is depicted with the presence of a *kinnara*, a heavenly musician in Ragamala painting [5]. It is highly mentionable here that during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, musical literature included a description of the ragas in short Sanskrit verses called *dhyana* (meditation). This highlighted the characteristics of the raga giving them a personality. This led to the raga-ragini system and saw the growth and profusion of Ragamala painting on various media. The Ragamala paintings show the *raga* as a human, divine or semi divine being. The themes cover *shringara* and *bhakti* among others, with the raga or ragini name inscribed along with the *dhyana* or the verse. The main *ragas* have five wives, the *raginis* and each couple have eight children called *ragaputras* (5). O.C. Gangoly in his magnum opus on Raga Ragini published in 1935 says that often..... ‘a raga is mistranslated as a tune, air or key.... that it is in fact a peculiar conception, having no exact parallel in any other system of music.....Raga is something that hinges the mind with some definite feeling, a wave of passion or emotion’ [1]

The Sanskrit verse or Hindi *doha*, *chaupai* or Persian quatrain on the top or behind a painting were relevant to the image and raga being depicted. A translation for a Todi Ragini verse composed by Deo Kavi reads as:

*‘The damsel with eyes like those of the deer plays melodies with the lyre in her hands....Todi, golden and colourful is a full toned melody sung at noon in winter’.*

Another translated Sanskrit text with regard to Nata ragini reads as:

*‘With his hand placed on the neck of his horse...effulgent like the gold his body is red with blood. The mighty one moves about in the field of battle. He is called Nata and is the very image of rage....this is Natika, otherwise called suddha Nataka’.*

Yet another verse from Sanskrit reads about Patamanjari...

*‘Separated from her beloved her beauty has faded from her body...she carries on her body her garland which has faded... she is assuaged by her favourite comrade. Her body is grey with dust, such is Patamanjari’*[1].

Ragamala paintings were created in most schools of Indian painting, as Pahari Ragamala, Rajput Ragamala, Deccani Ragamala, and Mughal Ragamala paintings. This form is thus a depiction of music in art, a symphony which creates a different experience for the viewer gazing upon it, especially if he knows about the musical modes. Ragamala paintings are now found across the world in museums, libraries and private collections.

**Ragamala paintings:** *symphony of colour and sound*

Ragamala painting is called a *ragachitra* in Indian vernacular. Medieval miniatures captured the combination of colour and music to produce paintings of timeless value. Almost every school of miniature painting have produced *ragachitra*; Mughal, Malwa, Bundi, Kotah, Mewar, Bikaner, Kangra, Basholi, Kullu, Chamba, Bilaspur, Jammu and the Deccan. In ancient India the murals made depicted characters and episodes from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century produced the Ajanta paintings, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century saw the Bagh paintings. Miniature painting which started in India around the 7<sup>th</sup> century, evolved from wall spaces to a smaller realm like the palm-leaf, cloth, bark, parchment and paper. Painting used to be a subject at *gurukulas*. During Mughal times music flourished during the reign of Akbar. Also he got illustrated the *Tutinama*, *Hamzanama*, *Anwar-i-suheli*, the *Baburnama* and the Mahabharata translated and illustrated as *Razmnama*. Emperor Jahangir chose themes like pleasure and pastimes, court life, portraits, holy men, birds, animals and flowers. Emperor Shahjahan preferred sophisticated and gold embellished portraits, court scenes, scenes of parties and animal portraits. Emperor Aurangzeb did not favour art and music while Emperor Muhammad Shah revived the art form with musical parties and moonlit revelries[9].



Figure 1: *Kakubha Ragini*, Aurangabad, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, U. S. A

Coming to the *ragamala* theme of paintings it is important to trace the history of treatises and texts on Indian music which influenced the *Ragamala* paintings. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century text, "Narada Shiksha" the ragas were first mentioned. The ragas were described in *Brihadesei* of Matanga during 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century. The iconographic vision of the ragas were elucidated in the 8th century *Ragasagara* by Narada

and Dattila. In 1131 A.D *Manasollasa* by Someswaradeva is an important text. The *Sangitaratnakara* composed between 1212 and 1247 A.D by Sarangadeva who was associated with the Yadava dynasty of the Deccan; is a landmark text on Indian musical theory. Amir Khusro, Sufi poet in the court of Alauddin Khilji (r. 1296 to 1316); added to the repertoire of ragas while introducing Persian



and Arabic elements. The *khanqas* of Sufi saints saw lot of Ragas and Raginis in the music therein. Rana Kumbha composed *Sangita Mimansa* in 1450. Meshkaran Mishra compiled a treatise *Ragamala* on Indian music in 1509. Pundarik Vitthal wrote *Sadraga Chandrodaya* in 1590, which dealt with both the northern and southern Indian systems of ragas and classification of ragas. The Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Muhammad Shah patronised music. Miyan Tansen is from Gwalior where the *dhrupad* tradition was started by Man Singh Tomar, the ruler of Gwalior. Tansen had written a text on ragamala but no one could find it. Man Singh Tomar composed *Man Kautuhal* which was translated to Persian by Faqir Khan in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's non-encouragement of music and painting led many artists and musician to provincial courts of Rajasthan, Deccan and Eastern India. But Muhammad Khan (r.1719 - 1748) revived music and the *khayal*, a composition was established. *Sangita-darpana* by Harivallabha was compiled in 1673 in Hindi.[9]

Ragas are believed to have emanated from the throat of Lord Shiva (from the trinity of Gods in Hinduism) and from ritulas...writes Dr Daljeet...the very basis of Indian classical music is the theory of Ragas. Indian music is based on ragas or modes of music. Raga is the basis of Indian tunes and melodies. The root word is *Ranja* ie. dyed in colour. Sage Bharata opines that music should be performed so as to colour the hearts of all beings. The dyeing of sound with the colours of music is *ragchitra*. Each raga has its own intonation, hours and perspective. Ragamala paintings connect with the viewer through colour, the *raga* which is otherwise conveyed only through sound or vocals. The paintings were made paying attention to detail like time of day and season; thus giving a visual form to a raga which is abstract in form. Ragas have been conceived as human beings, male and female. The paintings have been made using colours to depict moods, emotions, and symbols to depict ragas and raginis. Though it is not clear as to when this genre of painting began, there are 130 known sets from different schools. Some scholars say that the Ragamala happened with the lyrical *Kitab-i-nauras* composed by Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II (r. 1580-1626) wherein the *ragas* are written about and few visual images are elaborated. Between mid 17<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century the Deccan school produced many Ragamalas. Many museums like City Palace Museum, Jaipur, National Museum, New Delhi, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, Allahabad Museum, Prayagraj, Raza Library,

Rampur, Govt Museum, Alwar, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Berlin Museum of Indian Art, Berlin have ragamala paintings in their collections. Ragamala paintings are there at Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi and British Museum, London[9].

Each of the *ragas*, *raginis* and *ragaputras* invoke certain emotions; both Hindu and Muslim painters were inspired to depict them in visual form which became the *ragchitra*. Ragamala paintings depict all sentiments or *bhavas*. Phillippe Stern in 1933 calls it an atmosphere, a musical colouring associated with a mood or feeling, a sentiment during certain times of the day. A Raga is a sonal composition of musical notes or swaras having a sequence, form or structure of a peculiar significance... *ranjajyoti iti raga*...that which colours is a raga... ragas have descended from a parent stock which represent modes or types of some group of notes...a raga is a melody mould, a melody type or a musical pattern....observes O.C Gangoly, eminent Indian art historian in 1935 [1].

Various schools produced Ragamala paintings and they have followed texts of Narada, Harivallabha and Meshkaran along with their own innovations. The Deccan style had bolder colours and decorative character. The colours used in the image is used to create the ambience of the melody conveyed through the raga. The raga represents emotions and express sentiments or *Bhavas* as mentioned; the ragaputras emerged from different emotional situations. The aspect of *shringara* is an important one in Ragamala paintings. Shringara includes love and beauty. It is one of the nine *rasas*. It is well depicted in *Malkauns ragini*, *Sri Gandhari*, *Dhanasri*, *Ragaputra Sarang and Kumbha*, *Vilaval* and *Harsha*[9]. The various ragas stand for the language of the soul, the anguish of deep sorrow, joyousness, the tumult of passion, the thrill of expectation under the throes of love longing, the pangs of separation and the joys of union. The ragini *Lalita* depicts the sorrow of separation from one's beloved, *Todi* represents a surrender to animal life through the beauty of music and nature. *Nata* is a symbol of the martial aspect in human beings. The *dhyana* formulae vide the Sanskrit verses, Hindi *dohas and chaupais* (which helped reach a wider audience) signify the *devata-maya-rupa*, the image form of the ragas and raginis, the basis of the pictorial image of raga through the Ragamala paintings which began being made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century[1].

#### **Ragamala painting: glimpses from the Deccan**

The word Deccan takes its name from the word *dakhshina* in Sanskrit, meaning south and



called *Dakkan* by Muslim scholars. It is a large plateau spanning South-central India, a vast area south of the Vindhyas range of mountains. Following the Khalji invasion in 1296, two kingdoms emerged, the Vijayanagara founded in 1336 A.D by two brothers on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra and the other was the Bahmani Sultante with its capital at Gulbarga in 1347. After nearly a century and half the Bahmani empire broke up into 5 states between 1490 and 1512, Bidar, Berar, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda. They too fought among themselves but united against Vijayanagara in 1565 A.D. They fell apart after a while and took over Bidar and Berar resulting in three major kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda [3]. Muslim elites of the Deccan regularly commissioned illustrated manuscripts and paintings with text and inscription in Deccani languages. Deccan has a linguistic diversity with Marathi, Telugu and Kannada and Dakhni Urdu, a variant of Urdu language. Many Hindu empires also have ruled the Deccan like the Yadavas, Kakatiyas and Vijayanagara [10].

The main centres of Deccani painting flowered at Ahmadnagar, Bjpapur, Golconda and later Hyderabad. Painting had started to appear throughout the Deccan in the later half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; four Ragamala sets were produced at this time, stylistically different in Northern Deccan[10]. Though there were local influences the Deccan school expressed though the Islamic idiom, as the rulers were from Turkey and Iran. The Ahmednagar rulers were the Nizamshahis, the capital being founded by Ahmed Nizam Shah, a Hindu who converted to Islam. The other centres were Aurangabad and Burhanpur, mainly the later

Deccani paintings. After the Mughal conquest in 1687 some Golconda painters settled down in Aurngabad, the headquarters of the viceroys and some stayed on in Hyderabad working under the Mughal subedars and noblemen. Aurangabad was a cultural place and imbibed many influences in painting [3]. The painters working at these centres were from Turkey, Iran and maybe even Europe, but slowly the art evolved into its own idiom incorporating indigenous elements, folk and Deccan landscapes.

The Deccani art used strong colours, fine lines and had a sense of balance. The Ahmadnagar School under the Nizamshahi rule which started in 1490, gained momentum under Hussain Nizam Shah I and Burhan Nizam Shah II. A major work produced was the *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* (1565). The *Tarif-i-Hussain Shahi* praises Hussain and his queen Khanzada Humayun and the recalls the conquest of Vijayanagara kingdom. The *dohada* theme (a tree blooming on the touch of a beautiful maiden), court scenes, portraits of royals, Turk warriors, dervishes and scholars were also painted. The male figures are depicted with a purse like hanging from the belt. The paintings have Persian and european influences, calligraphy is present and the effect of Mandu's art tradition is also seen. Both Ahmadnagar and Bijapuri paintings show *chakadarjama* from the court of Mughal emperor Akbar[8]. Painting in the Nizam Shahi court at Ahmadnagar (1490-1636) took place under the three Sultans; Hussain Nizam Shahi I, his sons Murtaza I and Burhan II. The art mainly lasted for a short time and only some specimens have survived for the world to see[6].

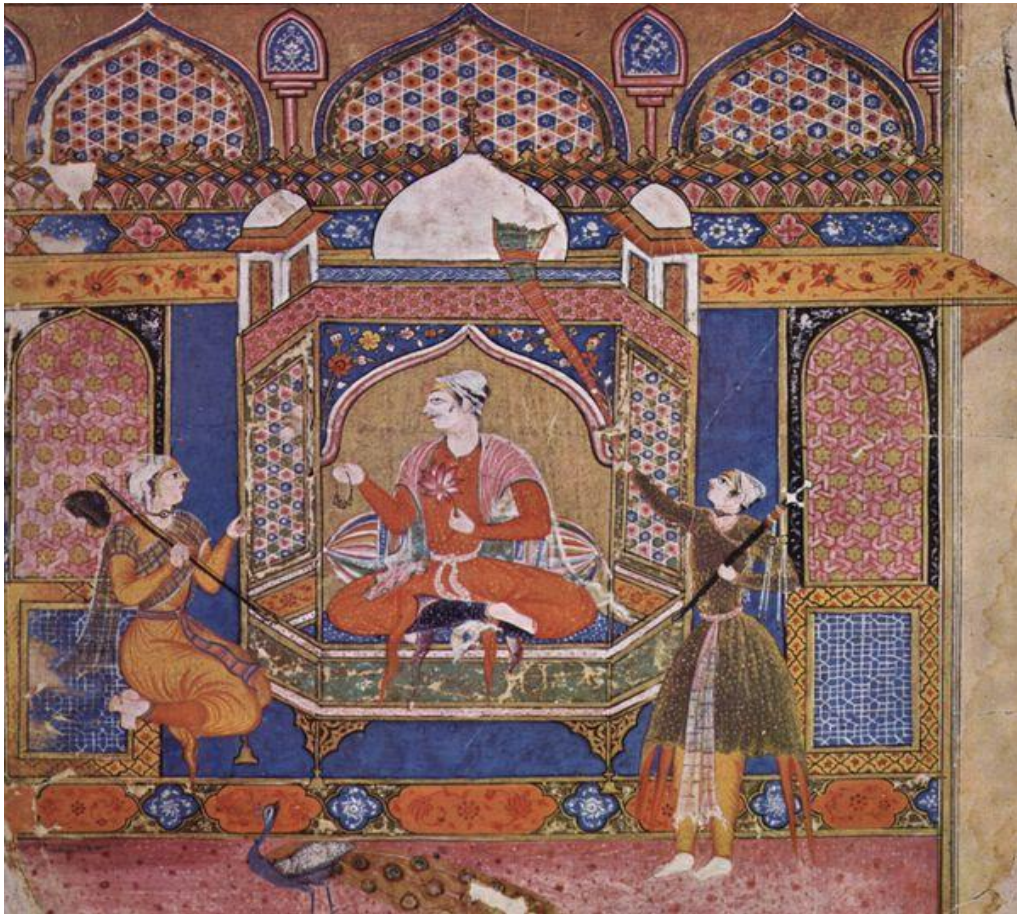


Figure 3: Ragamala illustration for *Raga Sri*: king with attendants, Bijapur, late 16<sup>th</sup> century, National Museum, New Delhi.

The Bijapur School's art activity started with the reign of Sultan Ali Adil Shah I (r. 1557 to 1579). He had book binders, illustrators attached to his library. Under him the *Nujum –al-ulum* was produced with many illustrations dealing with astronomy, magic and supernatural beings. The *Jawahar al Musiqat-i-Muhammadi* from the 1570s is a musical treatise with ragamala paintings. After his reign Ibrahim Adil Shah II succeeded him in 1579 and ruled till 1627. His adolescent portrait and *Procession scene* have become famous. His favourite elephant Atash Khan has figured in many Bijapuri paintings. Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II was a mystic, a calligrapher and a composer himself; he transformed Bijapuri painting. Highly sensitive, he was influenced by both Islam and Hinduism. The work produced during his reign is very strong on emotion; the word *nauras* meant everything to him which translates as 'nine flavours or essences of life'. His lyrical writings are collected in *Kitab-i-nauras*. The Sultan has been depicted hawking playing a musical instrument *tambur*. His reign was

followed by that of Sultan Muhammad Adil Shah (r. 1627 to 1656). His portraits resembled those of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan and the paintings of his time were realistic and with rich backgrounds[8]. The Bijapuri school was influenced by the Mughal and European style to some extent. Males are seen wearing turbans and royal costumes. The women had South Indian features with elongated eyes, wearing gold jewellery and saris. Bijapuri painting had paintings either with the *garden of paradise* setting or a idealised form of a human figure. The clothes were reflective of the era. Muslin robes, Kashmiri shawls, golden slippers, conical headgear are all seen on royalty and noblemen. Maulana Farookh Hussain was an important painter in his court who influenced all the artists of the time. The painting style of Bijapur changed when Ahmadnagar was divided between Bijapur and the Mughals. Many Rajputs were serving as Governors in the Mughal administration of Bundi, Kotah and Bikaner. These princes brought their families and probably painters as well. Portraiture became



popular and the works began to be dated and signed. Mughal artists too had come to Bijapur and influences are seen in the paintings. Slowly lot of North Indian influence came into the later works. Mohammad Khan and Abdul Karim were important artists during Sultan Mohammad Adil Shah's reign. Mughal and Deccani styles had amalgamated and continued during the reigns of Sultan Ali Adil Shah II and Sultan Sikandar Adil Shah; but the local styles re-emerged in the form of richer colours, prominent facial features and graceful gestures[6]

Figure 1 depicts *Kakubha Ragini* which is a depiction of a *utkanthita nayika* or a maiden waiting for her beloved. She is forlorn and depicted with two garlands of champaka flowers, one for herself and one for her lover or playing an instrument with peacocks around her, sometimes monkeys too. Figure 2 depicts Ragini Gauri. This ragini is believed to have originated at old Gouda of East Bengal and is actually Goudi and not Gauri. It is usually depicted as a maiden standing in a garden. She is an embodiment of *vipralambha shringara rasa* as she is separated from her beloved. Her confidantes and/or a peacock can also be shown. Figure 3 depicts the Sri Raga. The original concept was associated with the harvest season and festivals. Later this got modified to a court scene and musicians performing in a darbar. The raga is good looking, intelligent and wears fine clothes along with jewellery. Figure 4 depicts the *Khambhavati ragini*, an old melody associated with the old cult of Brahma. A lady is seen worshipping Lord Brahma and pleasing him with a song. [1]. In many Sri Raga depictions, the heavenly musician, a *kinnara* is present as seen in Figure 6 and Figure 8.

Figure 5 is the Vasanta raga wherein celebrations are in order with colour, ie. the festival of Holi, it is also the season of blooming trees. The

attendants are standing with *pichkaris* or syringes to throw coloured water at the couple on the swing. This is also the favourite festival of Lord Krishna along with Radha and other 'gopis' (cowherd girls) and cowherds. Many paintings have been created around this theme as seen in Figure 7.

Golconda was one among the Sultanates of the Deccan during 16th-18th century India. The Golconda school emerged after the Qutb Shahi Empire was founded by Quli Qutb Shah in 1512. He was an Iranian immigrant. An illuminated Holy Quran is from his time (1536). His successors Jamsheed Quli and Subhan Quli reign did not see much of artistic activity. The Persianate character of their painting can be attributed to the fact that the first king, Sultan Quli had migrated from Persia (now Iran) to Bidar in 1478. The Qutub Shahis maintained close ties; which included matrimony with the Safavids and patronised poets and painters from Persia. The typicality of Golconda paintings lies in its opulence and vitality which has an Indian flavour of richness. During the reign of Ibrahim Qutb Shah an illustrated copy of *Anwar-e-suheli* was produced. The *Sindbadnama*, *Shama wa parwana*, *Yousuf aur Zuleikha* are from his reign. His son Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah was a great builder and poet and his collection the *Qulliyat* is a richly illustrated book. His successor Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah patronised paintings with themes like hawking, hunting, composite beings, portraits, men, women and nature. His successor Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah (r. 1626-1672) period saw strong Mughal influences. The paintings of the later half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw European influence. After Deccan fell to the Mughals art activity reduced till the Nizam at Hyderabad after declaring autonomy, revived the genre of miniature painting[8].

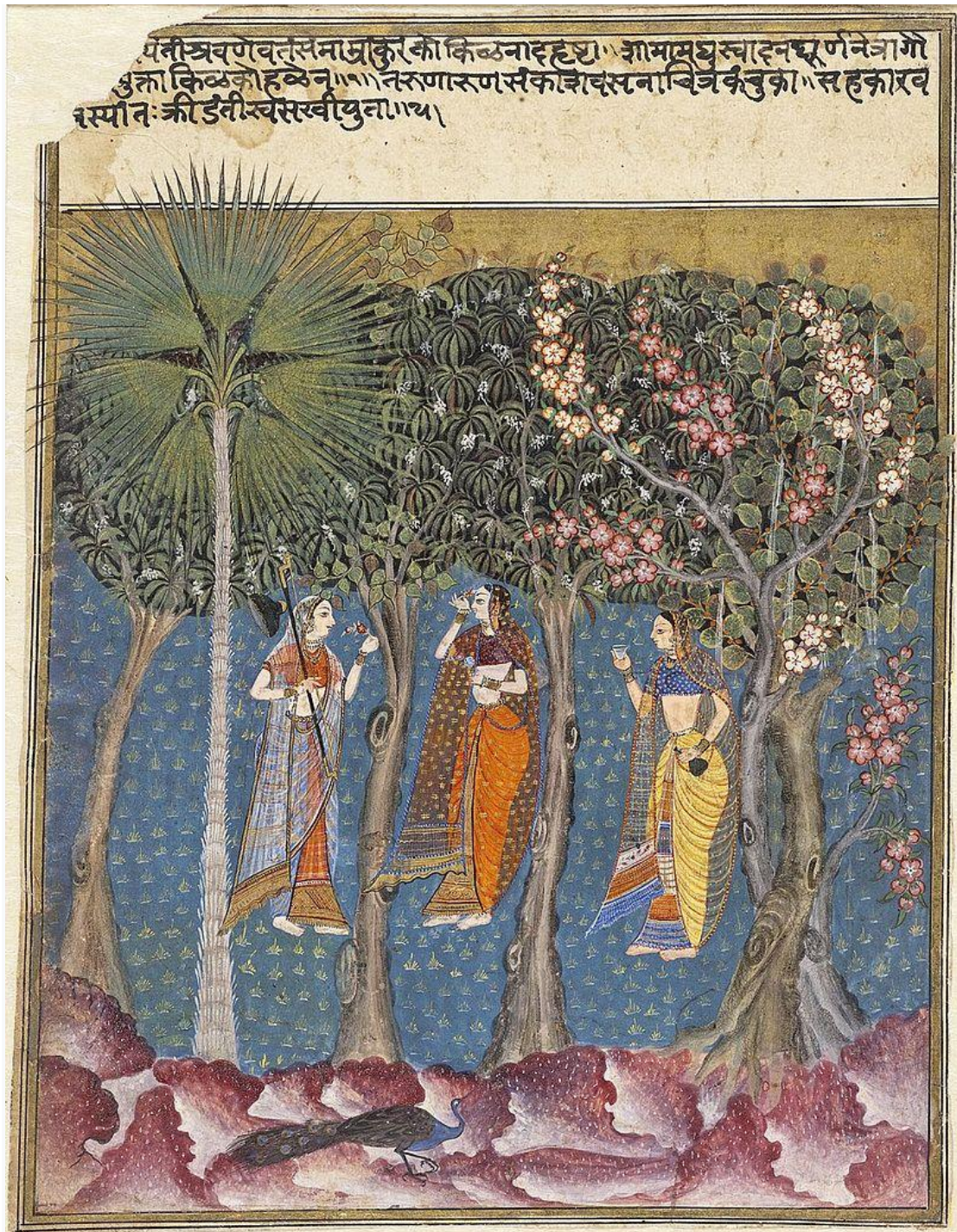


Figure 2: *Gauri Ragini*, Folio from a Ragamala, Ahmadnagar, late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, U.S.A.



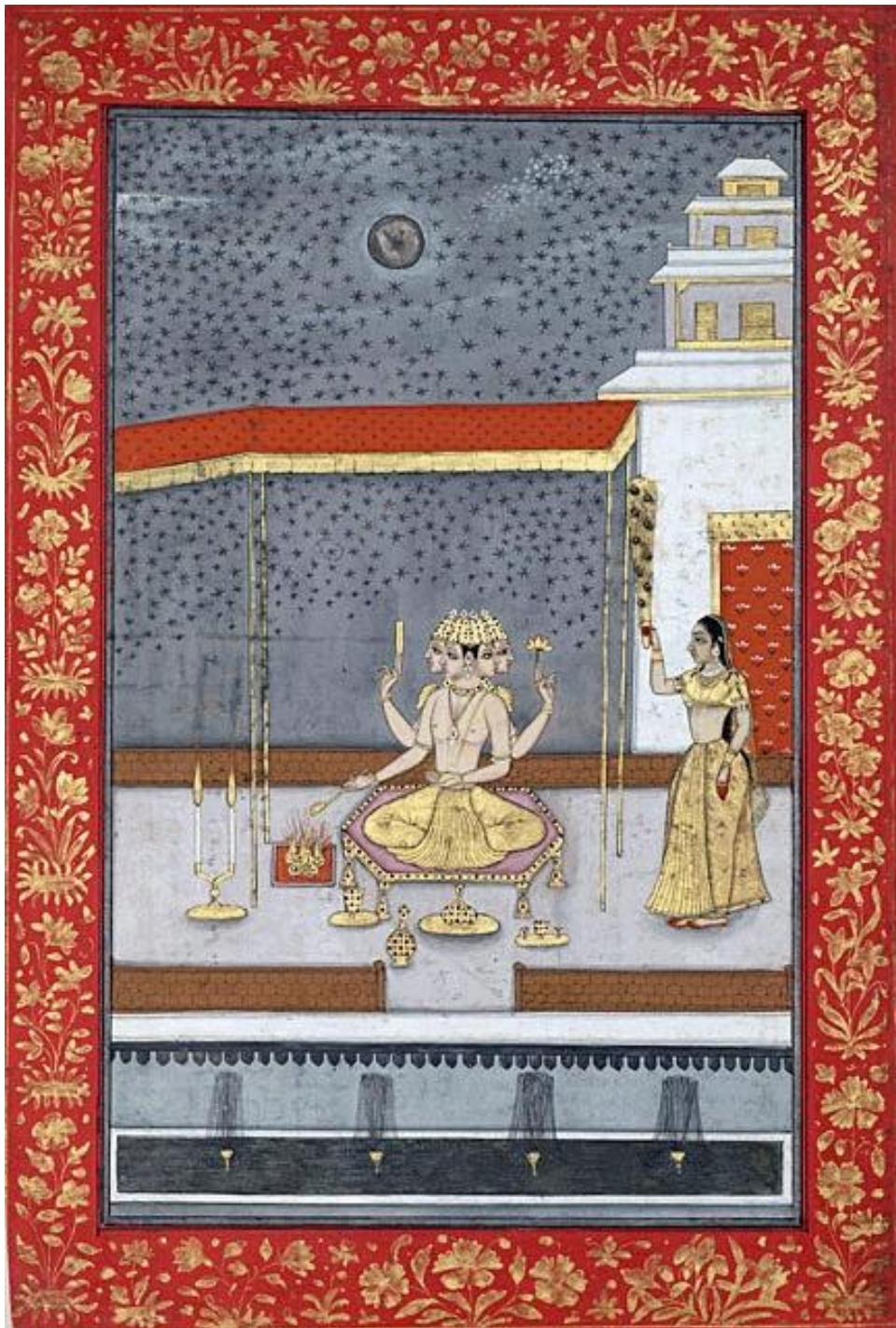


Figure 4: *Khambhavati Ragini*, Golconda, Deccan, c. 1750 A.D.

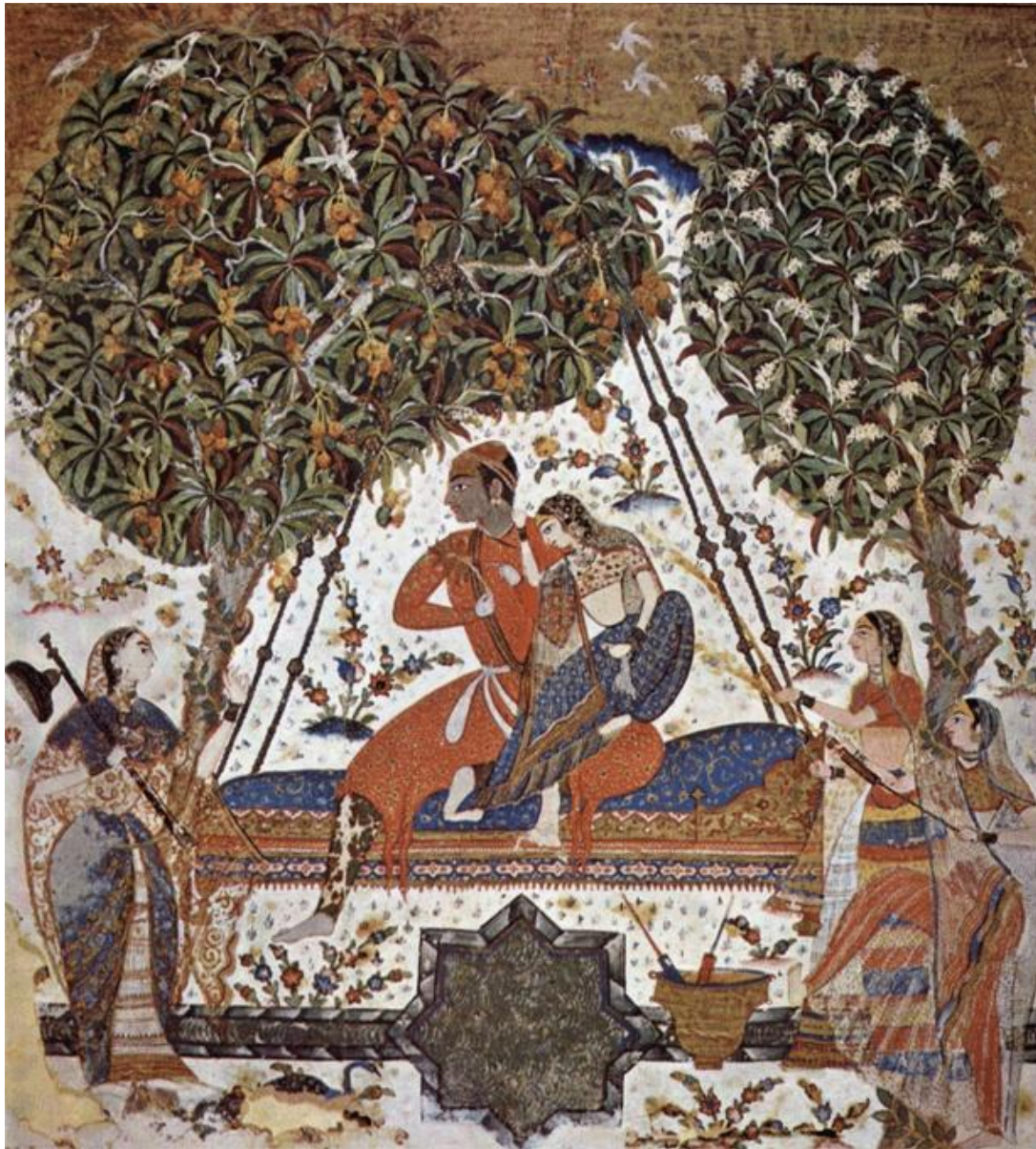


Figure 5: Vasanta Raga, Ahmadnagar, 1591-5, National Museum, New Delhi.

When Nizam-ul-mulk became autonomous in 1724 A.D a school of painting emerged at Hyderabad and flourished for 125 years. After him, his son Nasir Jung (r.1748-1750), then Muzaffar Jung (r. 1750-51), Salabat Jung (r.1751 -62) were patrons of Deccani painting. Paintings continued at the courts of Nizam Ali Khan, Nizam II or Asaf Jah II who was a patron of the arts and during his reign poets, musicians and artists came to his court. His biography *Tuzuki-Asafi* was written and illustrated by Tajalli Ali Shah in 1793. His court painter was Rai Venkatachalam. Raja Chandulal also patronised the arts and many works were made for Raja Nanak Ram, Rai Rayan and other Hindu noblemen. The

political condition during the 18th century was not very stable and this affected the character of the paintings. However lot of portraits were made between the fall of Golconda in 1687 and the beginning of the Asaf Jahi rule in 1724, when the area was under the Mughal governors[7].

The school was influenced by other styles especially Qutub Shahi ie. Golconda style, but it had its own characteristics. This can be seen in its treatment of subjects, costumes, landscape, flora, fauna and the general colouring. Scenes from gardens and courtyards have been captured other than the main themes which included portraits of the rulers and their families, noblemen, women on



terraces, saints and *Raga-raginis*. In fact Deccani painters of this period were very much interested in producing Ragamala paintings[7]. Sikandar Jah succeeded Nizam Ali Khan as Asaf Jah III (1803-1829) and paintings were still being made. Under Asaf Jah IV and Asaf Jah V, paintings depicting gardens and harem scenes were made. By the mid-nineteenth century the demand for these paintings reduced and the paintings went into history but give us a glimpse into the life of that time.

These paintings are now available at India Office Library – Johnson Album, CVSMS, Mumbai, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad and Jagdish and Kamala Mittal Museum, Hyderabad. Most sets had 36 folios. City Palace Museum, Jaipur has a Ragamala set of 132 folios. The artists painted on cloth, glass and ivory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Deccani painting was also influenced by the Mughal much before the fall of the Golconda kingdom[7]. Farrukh Beg a Mughal artist worked in the Deccan for a few years under Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah (r. 1580-1627 A.D) of Bijapur and introduced European motifs[10].

Paintings of the Hyderabad school depict flowers and trees like the palm tree, coconut, plumeria, champa etc. Flowering plants, terraces and

parapets made of marble with *jaali* (trellis) work, doors in brown are seen. Some paintings depict peacocks, ducks and fishes. The sky is blue or blue-green with touches of indigo to depict clouds. Carpets and rugs are seen in some works. The human figures are tall and have sharp features. Women are shown wearing stringed pearl necklaces[2]. The school has produced Ragamala painting depicting various Indian musical modes the *raga* and *ragini*.

Paintings were also made at the Samasthans (principalities) of the Hindu Rajas. Before 1750 the painting did not acquire any uniqueness. A set of 30 *ragas* and *raginis* was produced around 1750 A.D at Wanaparthi with strong Hindu influence. Shorapur, a centre for Sanskrit learning produced works that had fine decorative details and illustrated mythological themes, with Maharashtrian dress style and the use of bright colours. Artists from here migrated to Hyderabad after 1850. There were other centres, besides the Samasthans which existed at Kurnool, Cuddapah and Arcot under Muslim Nawabs. The work produced there was similar to the Hyderabad style except in treatment of headdress. The paintings at Arcot depicted European influence.[7].



Figure 6: *Sri raga*, folio from a Ragamala Maharashtra, Aurangabad, circa 1675, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, U S A.

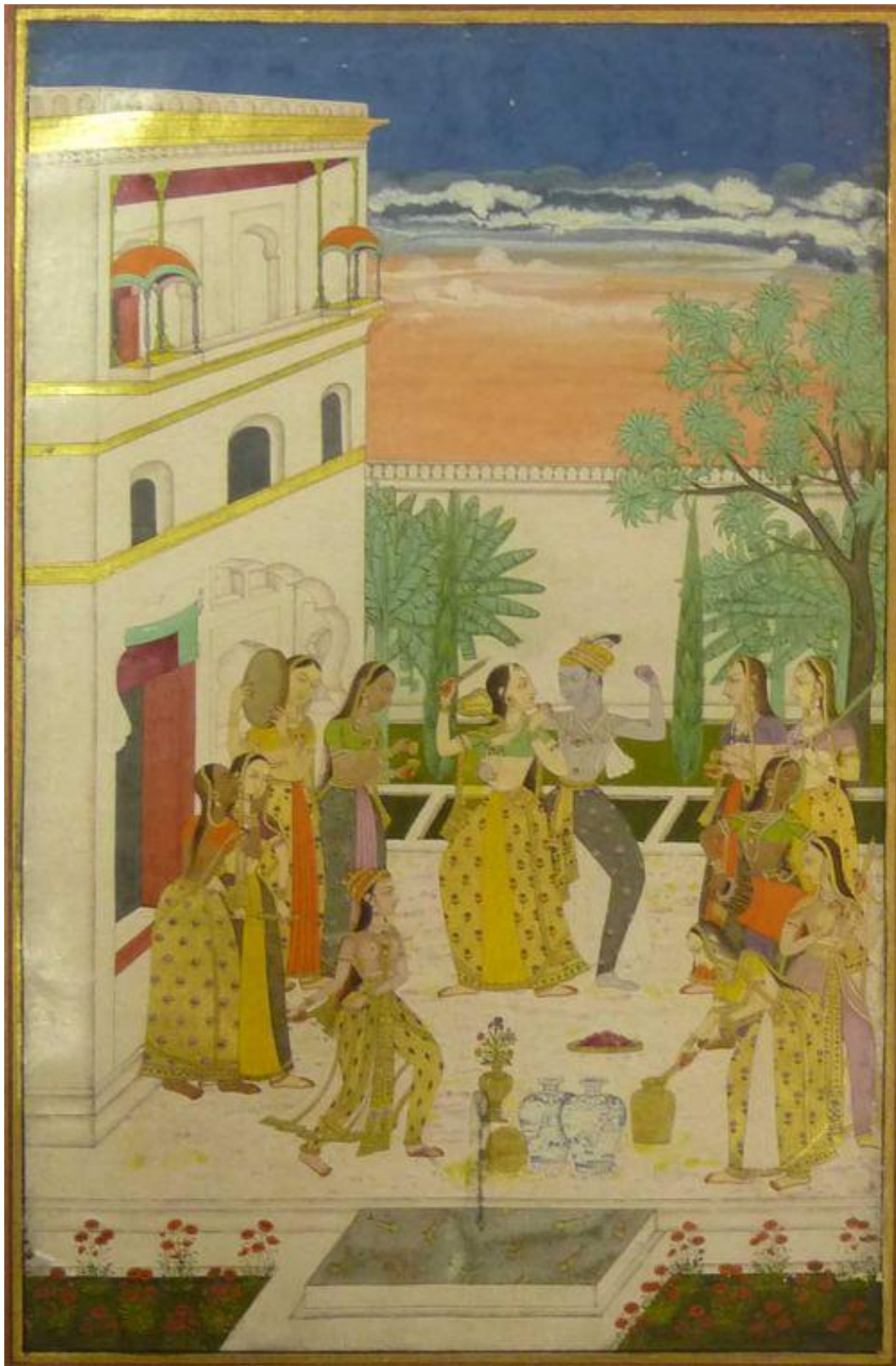


Figure 7: *Vasant raga* , Hyderabad, c. 1760. British Library, London, U K.

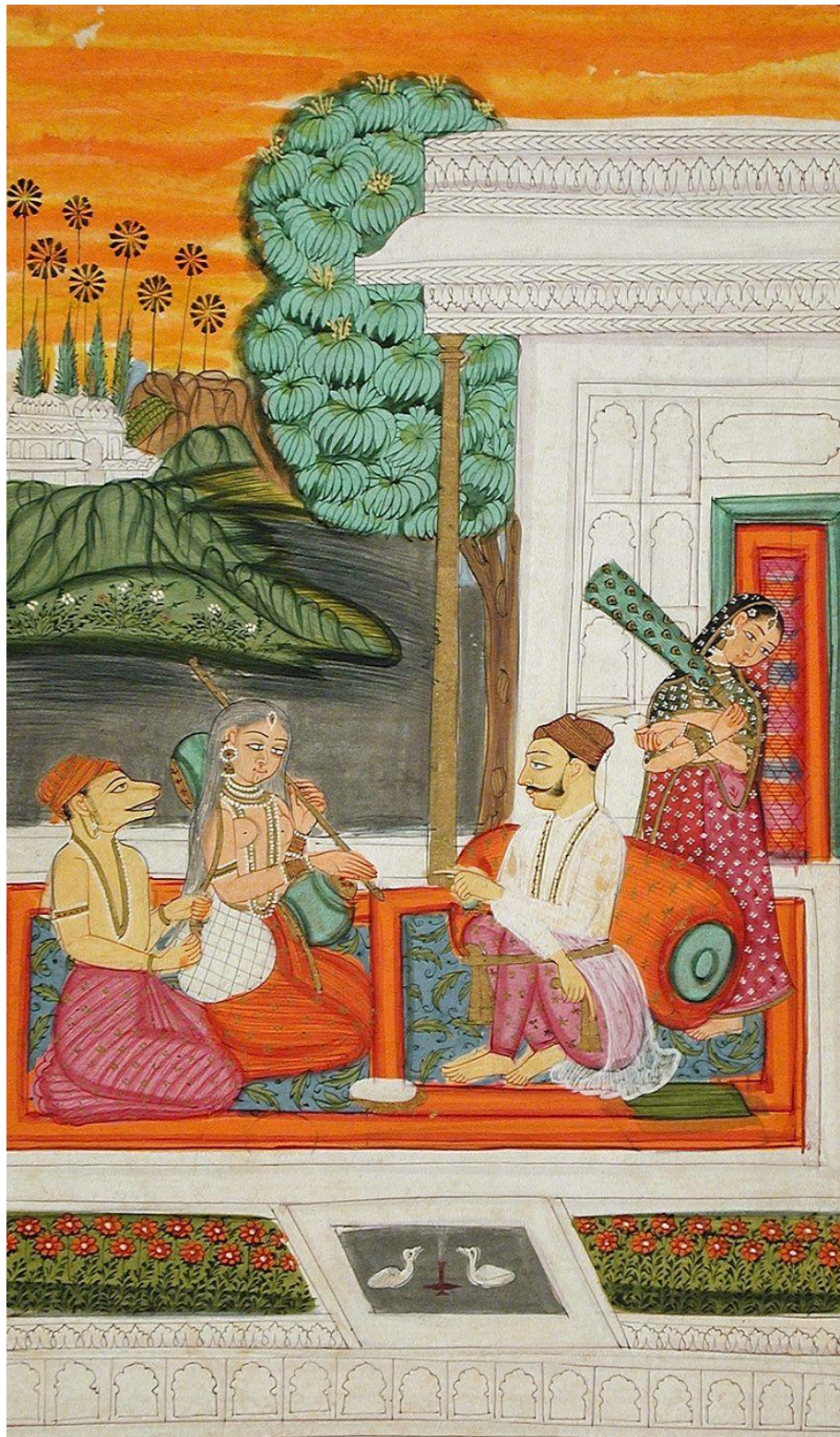


Figure 8: *Sri Raga*, Kurnool or Wanparthy, circa 1800,  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, U.S A.



### Ragamala painting: the Salar Jung Museum collection

The Salar Jung Museum at Hyderabad in Telangana State of South India is a repository of the artefacts of diverse European, Asian and Far Eastern countries of the world. The major portion of this collection was acquired by Nawab Mir Yousuf Ali Khan popularly known as Salar Jung III. The Salar Jung family has a glorious past with a history of statesmanship for generations. The family's rich contributions towards the vast collection of art objects, manuscripts and printed books find a place in this museum and library of national stature. The museum has a good collection of miniature and modern paintings[4].

Most schools are well represented in the museum's miniature painting collection starting from the early style Jaina Kalpasutra illustrations from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The miniature painting collection at the museum reflects other schools which evolved from the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century which was a turning point in this genre of painting. The museum has Mughal, Deccan, Rajasthani and Pahari schools which also includes some Ragamala paintings. The Deccani Ragamalas are mostly the Ragamala from the Hyderabad school, Aurangabad, Kurnool and the samasthans[4]. The Ragas have been given many classifications by various authorities. Bharata's classification, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century, Someswara's *Manasollasa* from 1131 A.D, by Meshkaran in 1509, Ramamatya's *Svara mela kalanidhi* in 1550 A.D, Damodara Misra's *Raga-Darpana* in 1625 A.D, Abd-al-Wali Uzlat's *Ragamala* in 1759 A.D and Pandit V.N. Bharkhande's (Vishnu Sharma) *Abhinava Raga Manjari* of 1921 among many others[1].

The museum has *Malkauns, Bhairavi Ragini, Dhanasri, Todi Ragini, Shyam Kalyan ragini, Purbi Ragini, Khambavati Ragini, Ramkali, Kori, Lalita, Karnati, Kalki, Vibhas, Pancham, Kedara, Gauri, Ragini, Vaishakhi ragini, Bangali ragini, Gujar, Seth Mallar, Ramkali Ragini, Kori ragini* in its Deccani ragamala collection.

Figure 9 is a miniature painting in Deccani style depicting Khambhavati ragini (main Raga Malkauns) from the museum's collection with inscription on top: four headed God "Brahma" seated on a *chowki* with two lamps lit before him. Two devotees, one seated on the right side and the other standing on the left holding a fly-whisk in her right hand. Flowers, trees, buildings & sky are seen through the door. Flower plants and fountain are in the foreground. Creeper design on blue band in between plain golden bands around the painting.; floral pattern on light red in gold in the margin. White, black and golden lines around the margin; three date trees in the background can be seen.

Figure 10 is a miniature painting in Deccani style depicting *Nat ragini* with inscription on top: a lady attacking her opponent riding on horse back with a shield in her left hand. Her opponent defending with his shield and going to attack with his sword. Being defeated a man has fallen down on the ground holding a broken sword in his right hand and a shield in his left. His turban lies near his head. This painting reflects the martial aspect of humans. There are trees, hillocks and cloudy sky in the background with lotuses in a pond in the foreground. Creeper design on blue band in between plain golden bands around the painting.

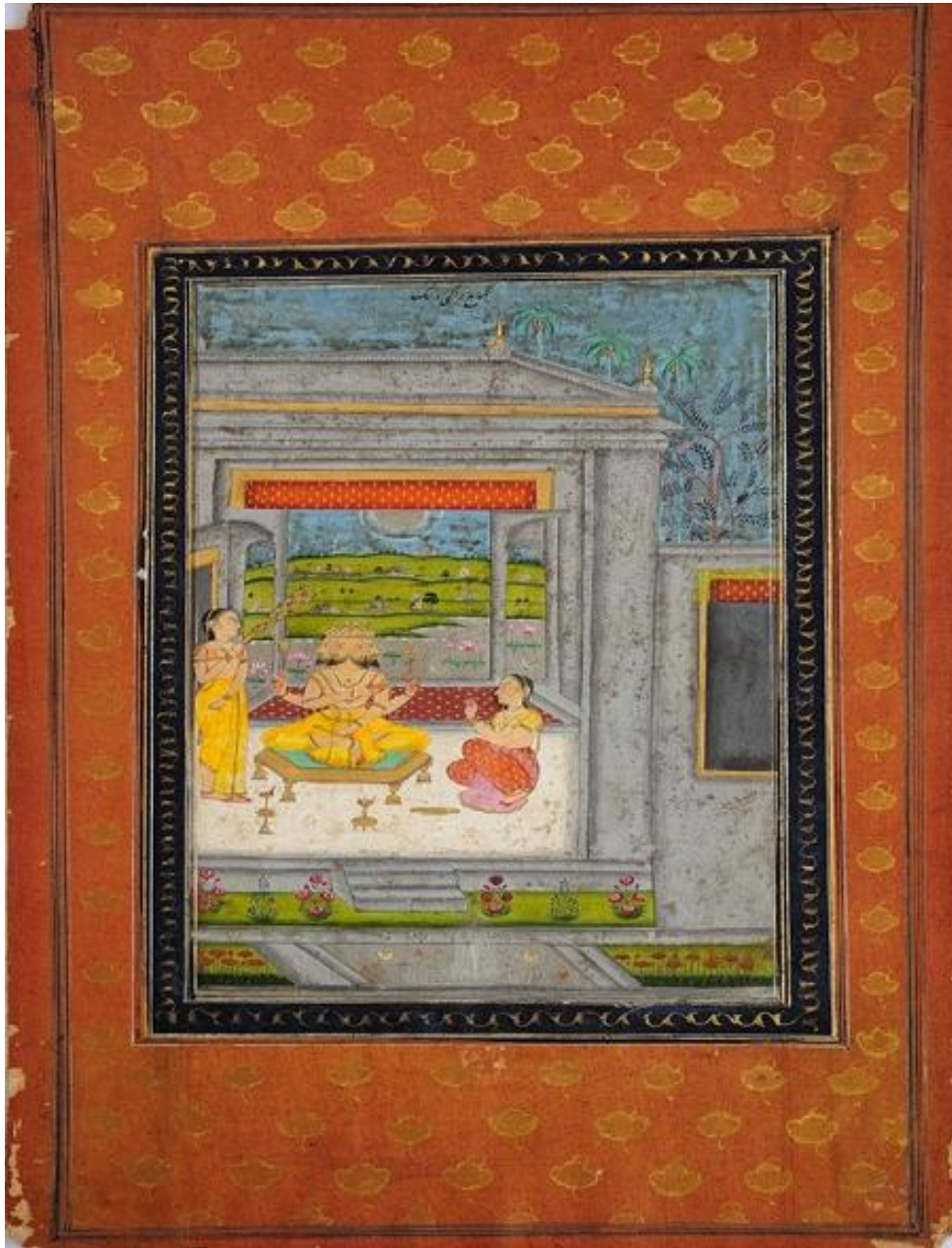


Figure 9: Raga Khambhavati, Hyderabad, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.



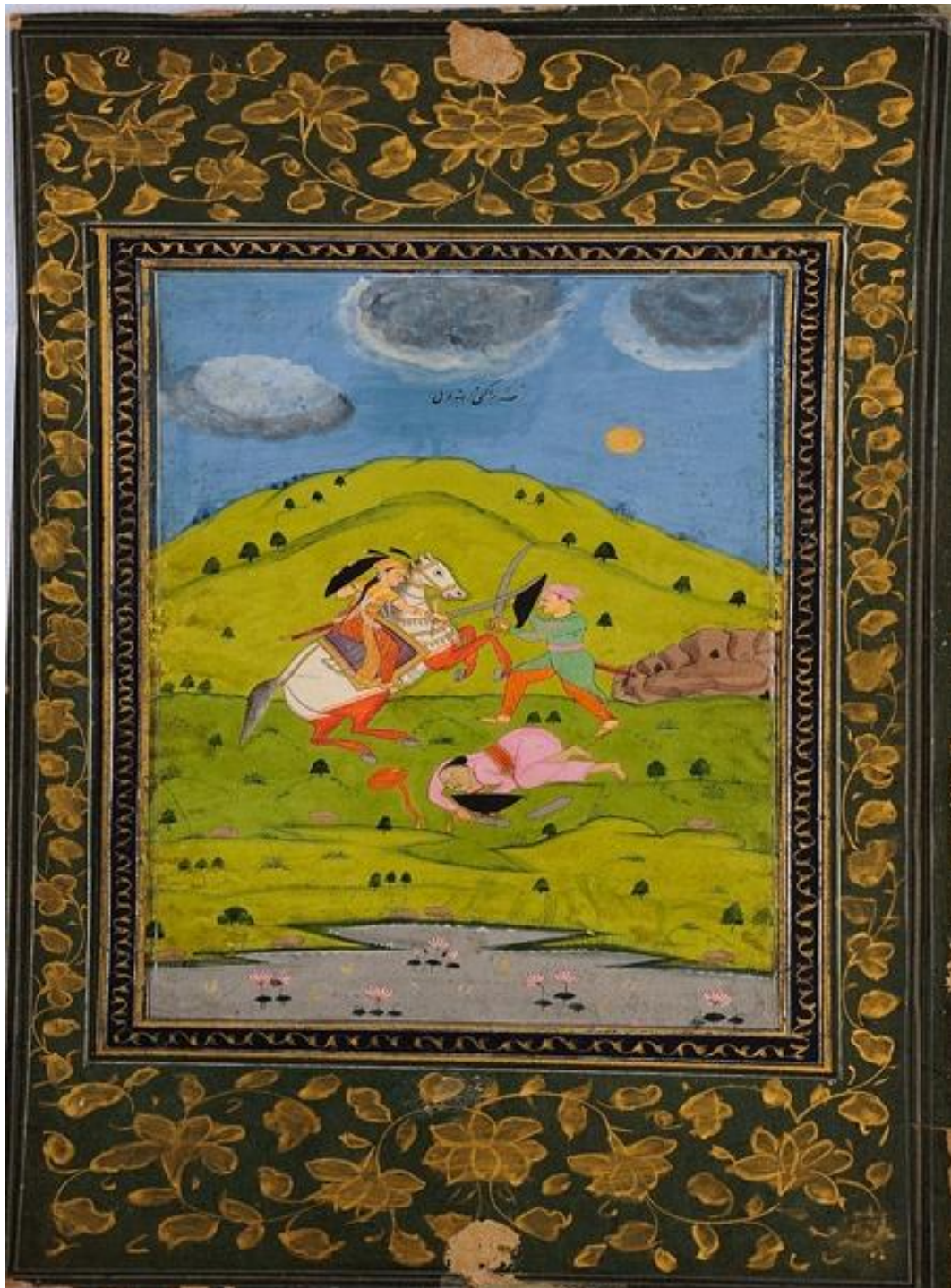
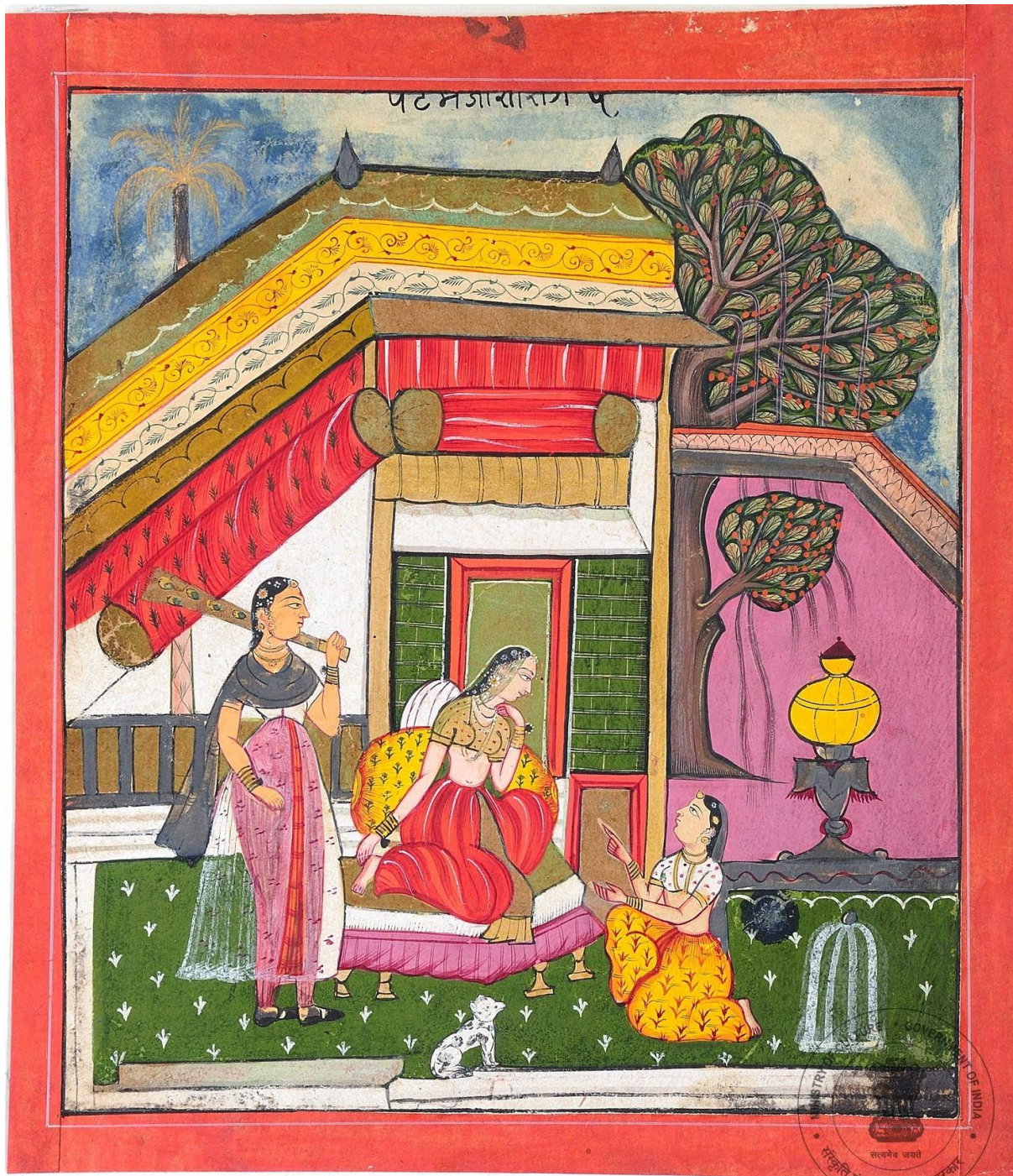


Figure 10: *Nat ragini*, Hyderabad, Deccan, 19<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 11 is a miniature painting of a seated lady against a pillow with a standing lady attendant holding a fly-whisk at the back and another speaking with her. The lady is separated from her beloved and sharing her pain with her close

confidante. This painting depicts *Rag Patmanjari*. The name is mentioned in the inscription on top. The two red curtains are rolled up. There is a tree in the background against a blue sky. A flower bed and fountain are in the foreground.



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Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad  
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Figure 11: *Raga Patmanjari*, Hyderabad, late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 12 depicts a Ragamala painting depicting "Hindola Rag"; couple in the centre seated on a swing, three ladies in two groups standing on either side of which three are holding

musical instruments. A small tank in the foreground, backdrop depicts trees and birds, border with floral design in gold color on a pink background and foliate design in gold around the painting.

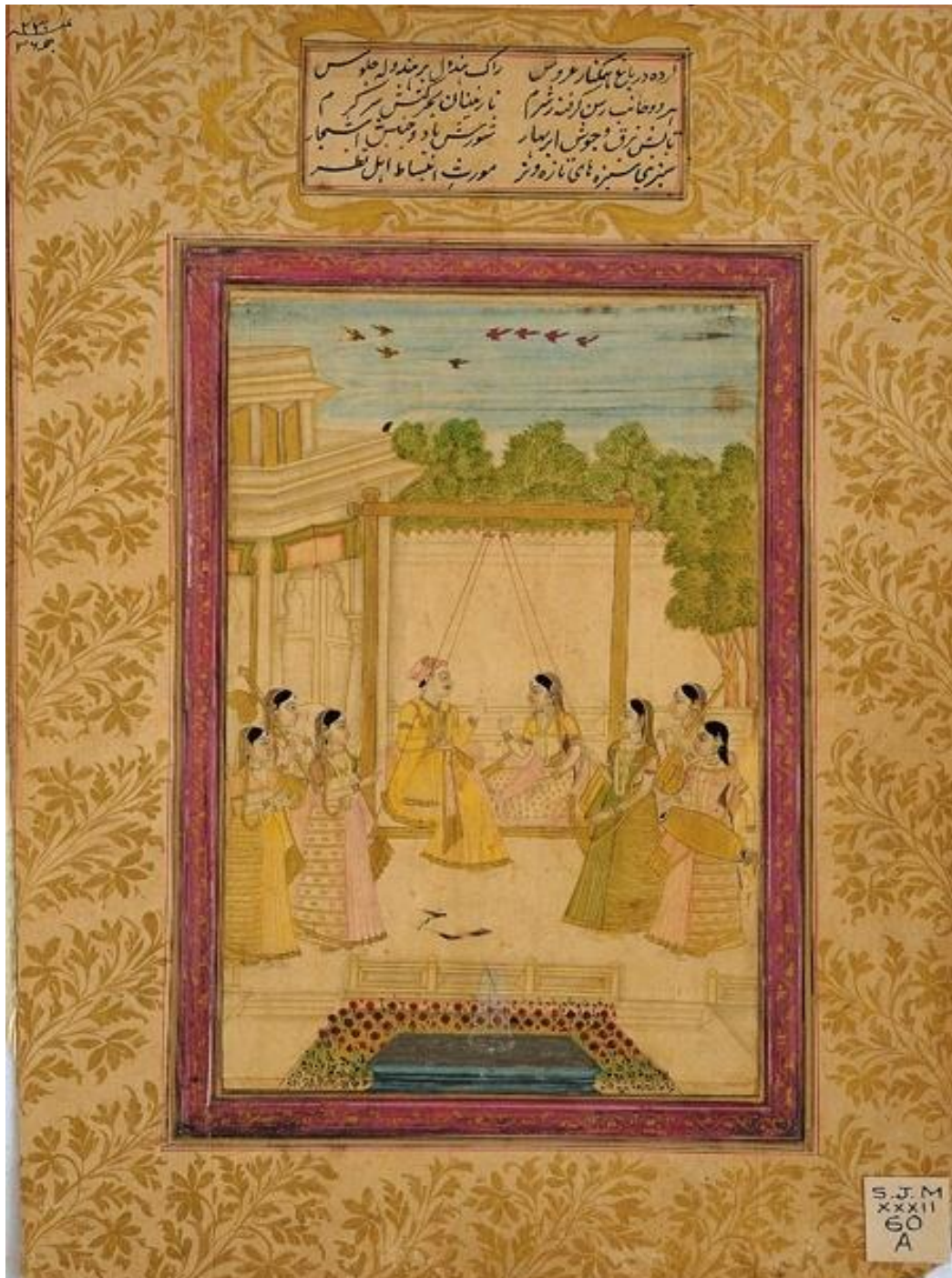


Figure 12: *Rag Hindola*, Hyderabad, Deccan, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 13 depicts a king standing, holding a sword and shield facing two soldiers with spears and shields, an elephant on the foreground. The painting is from Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh and

represents *Rag Kanada*, also called *Karnata* associated with elephant hunting, maybe a descendant of a hunting melody [1].

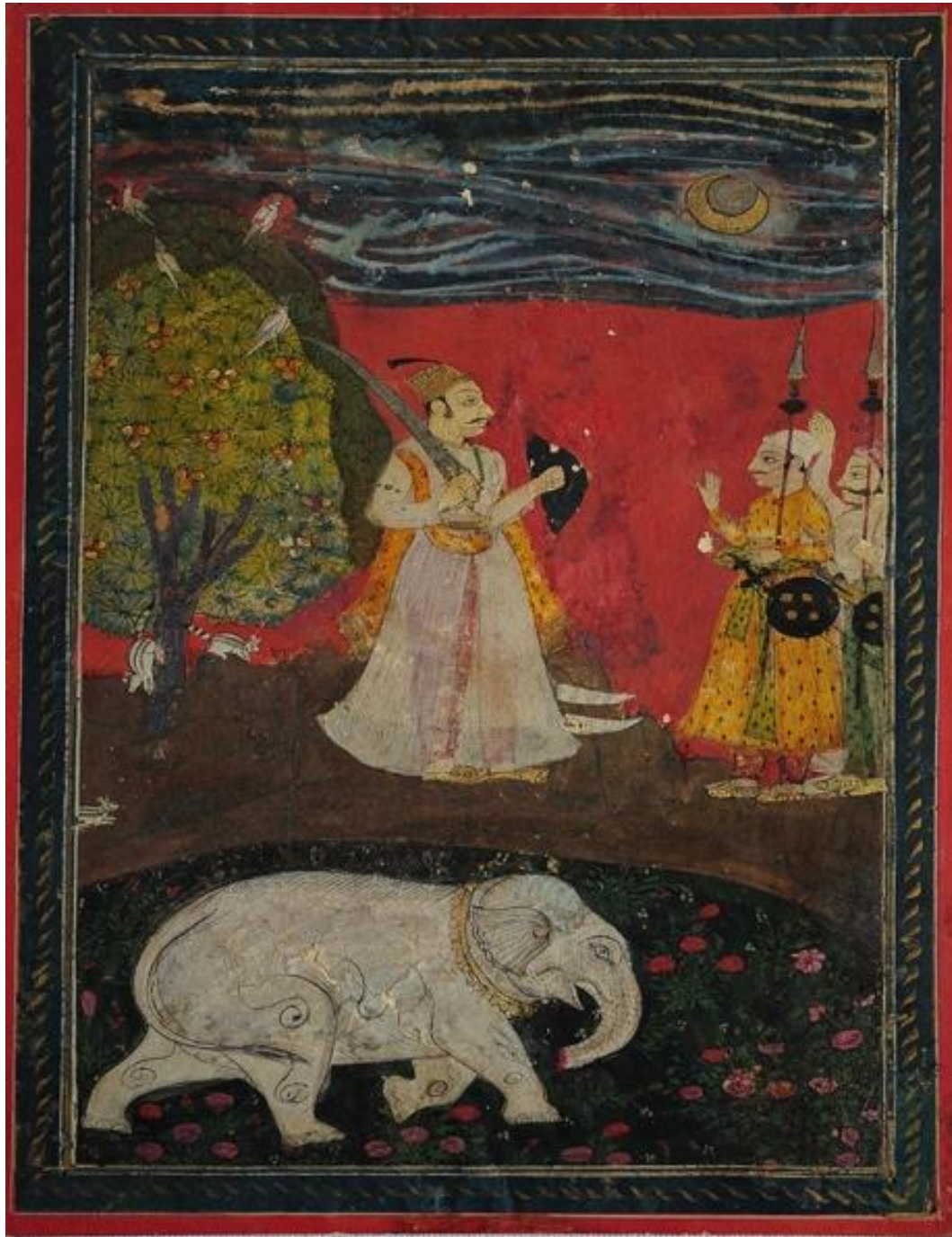


Figure 13: *Rag Kanada*, Kurnool, Deccan, 17<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 14 depicts *Dhanasri Ragini*. A lady seated against a cushion, making the portrait of her beloved, with three lady attendants, two of them seated in front of her, and another standing at the back with peacock fly-whisk in her right hand, in a

palace with a pond and garden at the back, nine birds and one squirrel is seen at the top portion. Border with floral design in gold colour on a pink background. Persian inscription at the top foliate design on all sides, from Hyderabad school.

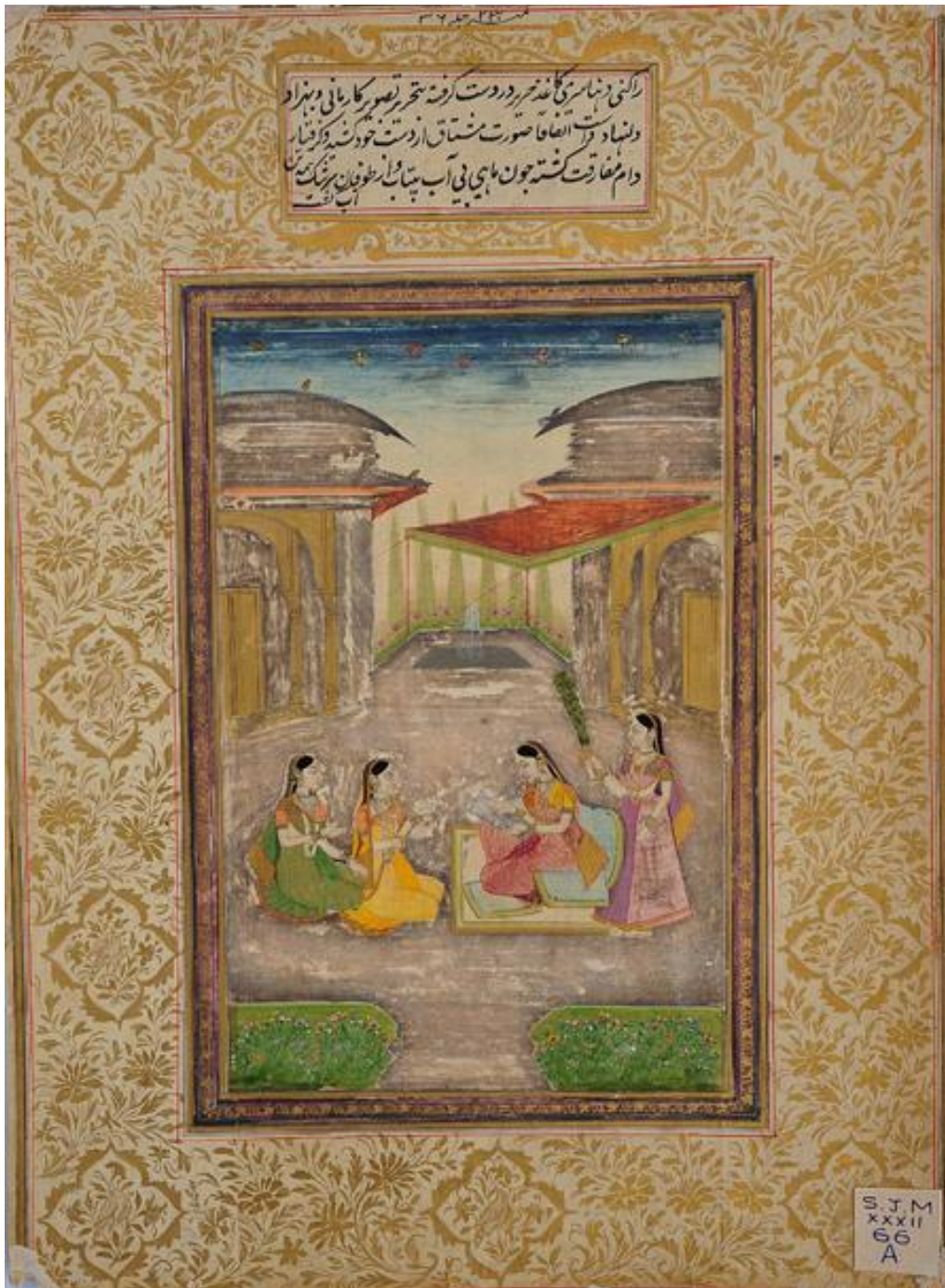


Figure 14: *Dhanasri Ragini*, Hyderabad, Deccan, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 15 depicts a lady waiting for her beloved, holding her right hand aloft chasing away something, probably a bird or probably startled by

lighting. A goblet and a decanter in front of the building add to the mood of the composition. This is the depiction of *Madhu-Madhavi ragini*.



Figure 15: *Madhu Madhavi Ragini*, Deccan, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 16 depicts Todi Ragini. A Ragamala miniature painting from Hyderabad in Deccan style with inscription on top: a forlorn and desolate lady standing in the forest holding a *veena* in her hands looking at deer standing on either side of her

listening to her music. Grassy land and trees in the background; a water-body with lotuses in the foreground. Creeper design on blue band in between plain golden bands around the painting. Foliate design on light red band in gold in the outer margin.

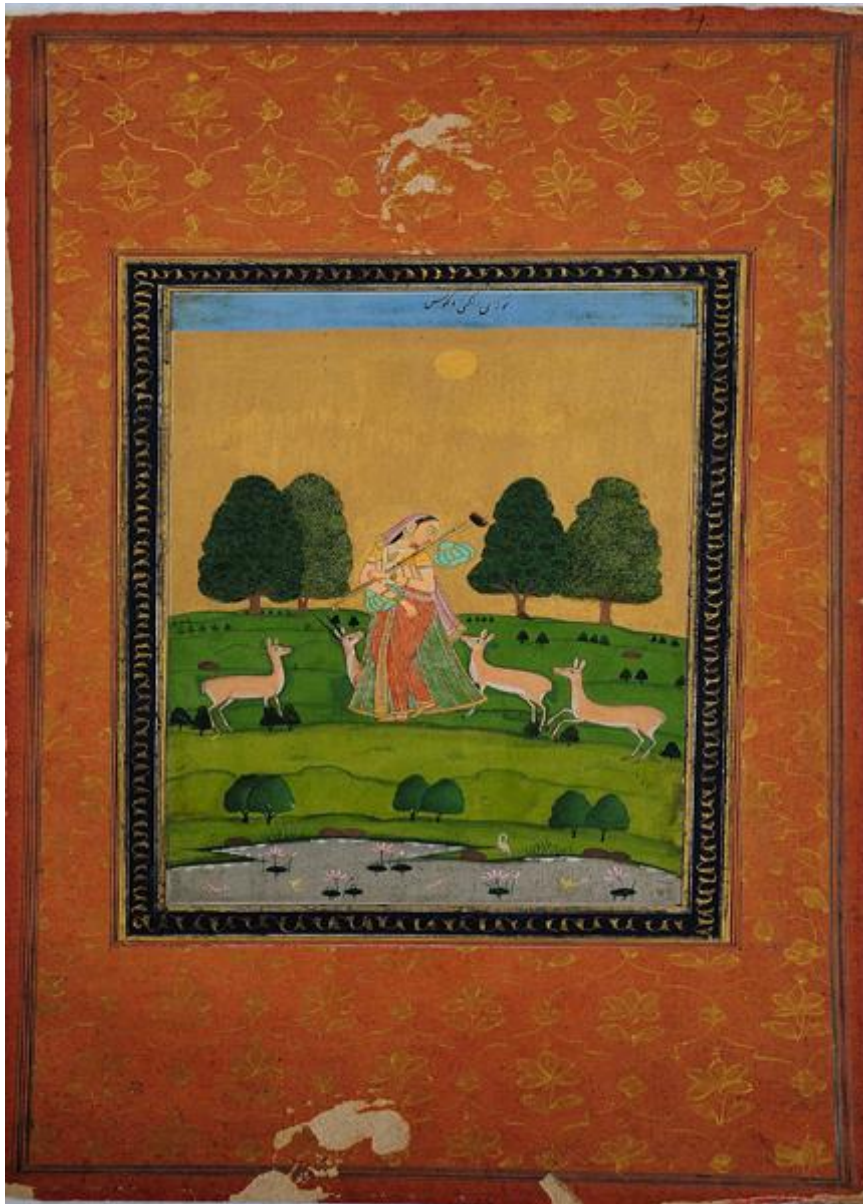


Figure 16: *Todi Ragini*, Hyderabad, Deccan, late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

Figure 17 depicts *Vasant Ragini* in Deccani style with inscription on top: A Raja and Rani enjoying music celebrating Holi festival in the courtyard. Some other ladies also taking part. Two ladies on right, three on left playing on their musical instruments. Two ladies standing closely in front, one is holding a syringe in her hands and the other placing her left hand on her cheek. Two ladies

standing in front holding syringe in their hands and the third filling her syringe in a vessel. A pitcher, jar and tray in front. Tree and sky in the background. Flower plants and a passage in the foreground. Creeper design on blue band in between plain golden band around the painting creeper on light red band in gold in the margin.

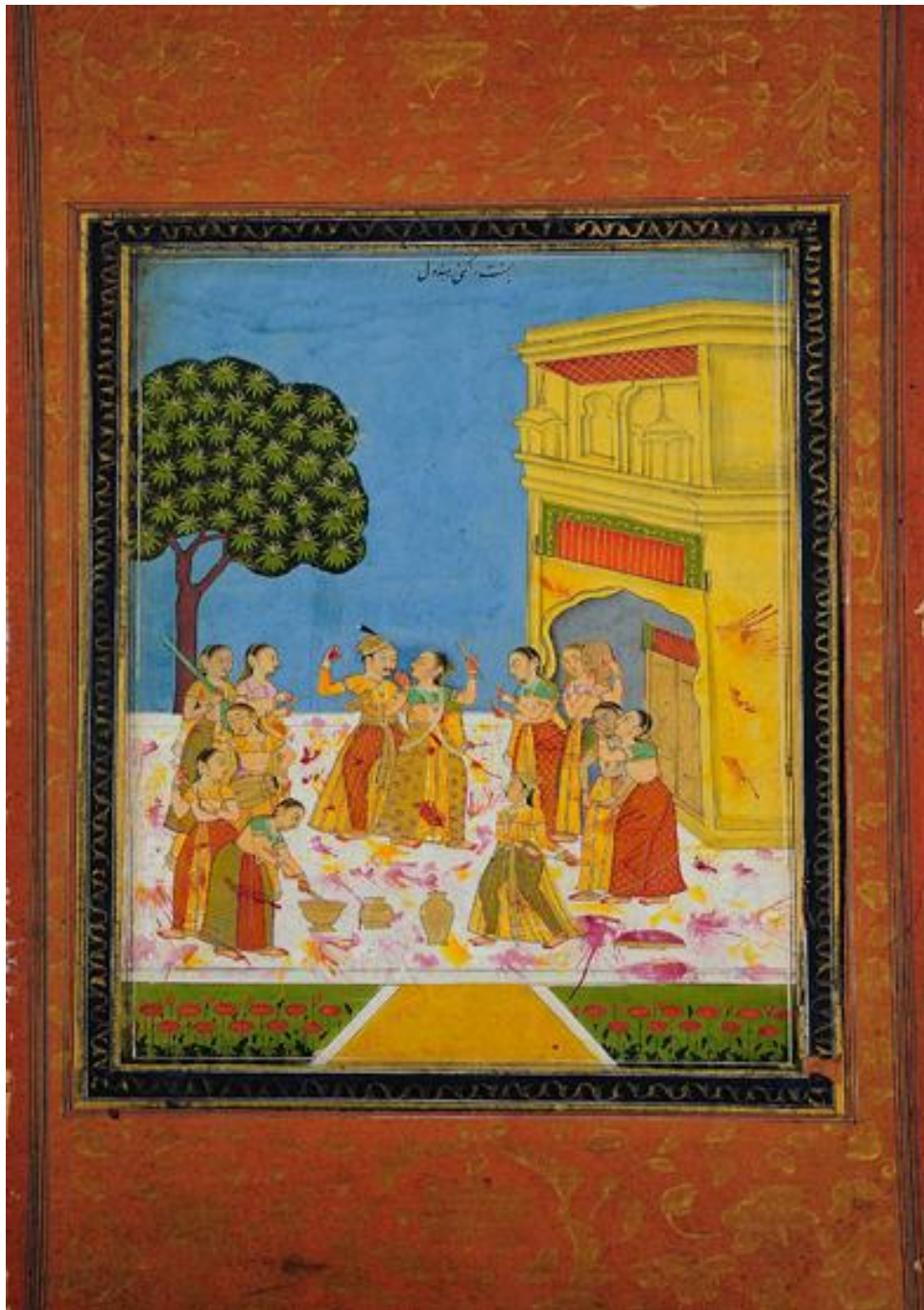


Figure 17 : *Vasant Ragini*, Hyderabad, Deccan, late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, India.

#### ENDNOTES, REFERENCES AND IMAGE ATTRIBUTIONS





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- [28]. Figure 16 – Courtesy, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.
- [29]. Figure 17 – Courtesy, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.