

## Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings

Indian arts

Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings

Akash T, Anuja P, Akshay P, Anjali M,  
Aboli G, Aishwarya G.

COLLEGE PROJECTS  
SEM VII, IX 20-21

## INDEX

- **Introduction**

1. History
2. Material used
3. Process of painting

- Types of Pahari Paintings
- Kangra school of paintings
- Geometrical composition
- Spatial construct
- Landscape
- Palace Inside outside
- Sacred and profane



## Introduction

- Pahari paintings, meaning **paintings from the hills**, come from the **mountainous regions** of northern India once known as the Punjab Hills but which now form the present day states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. They include some of the most brilliant as well as the most lyrically beautiful of all Indian painting styles.
- Pahari paintings are basically **decorative oriental art**. There are certain stylistic differences between different sub schools of pahari paintings .
- The style was also known as **“PahariQualam”** or **Pahari school of painting**.



## Material Used

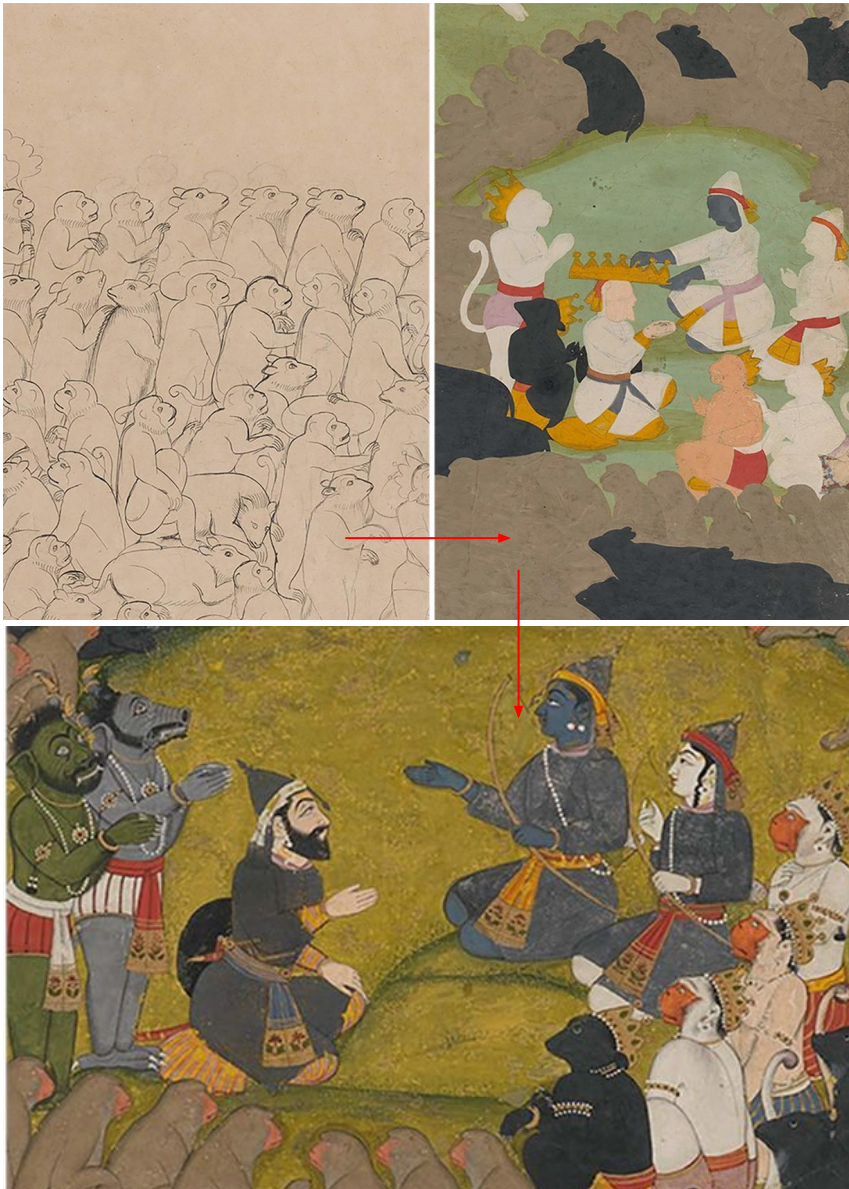
- The miniature paintings were done on handmade paper made of **bamboo, cotton and locally available materials**.
- These are popularly known as Sialkoti paper. After the lines are drawn on the paper, it is given a coat of white colour.
- The surface of the paper is polished by rubbing a smooth stone on it. The painters also used stencils to reproduce more copies of the paintings.





## Process of painting

- The artist of Pahari paintings had a similar and consistent style. They all followed uniform methods and their techniques were simple and indigeneous.
- The sheets of handmade paper were joined together to get the desired thickness.
- The outline were drawn in light reddish brown or grey-black colors and then a very thin transparent coating was applied on the sketches .
- Finally on white coating the colors were filled.
- The colors used in the miniature were derived from minerals, vegetable stones, etc.

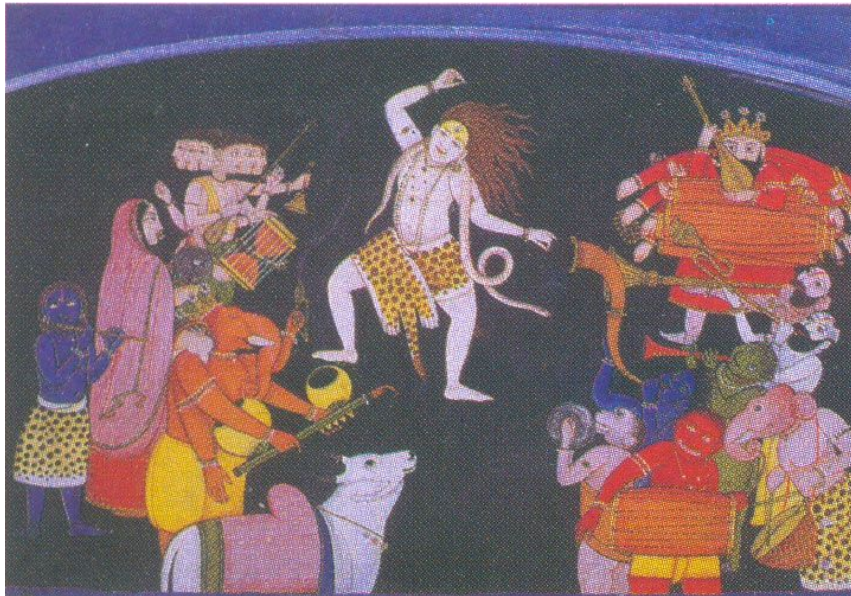
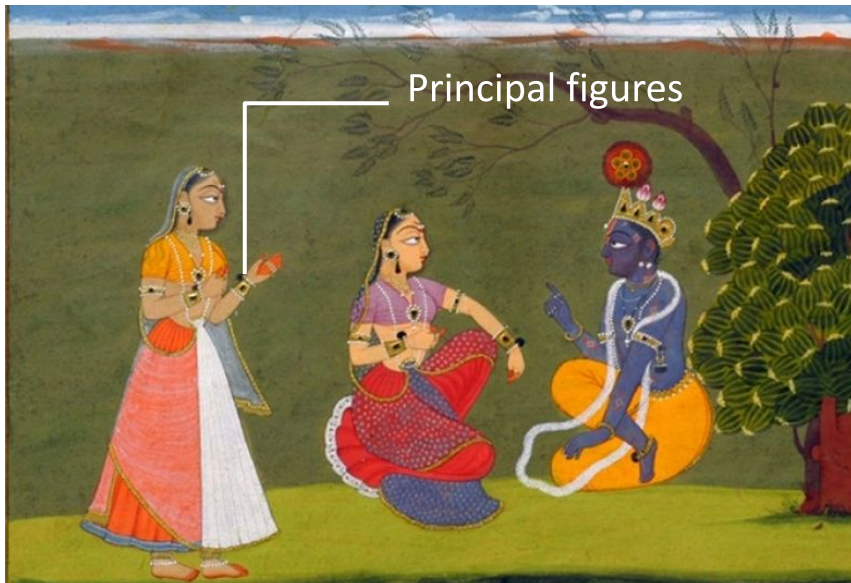


## FOREGROUND ORIENTED

- Pahari Paintings except in certain cases are mainly **foreground oriented**.
- The principal figures are placed more or less in foreground of the composition except in some court scenes and even then the setting is different.

## SPACE DIVISION

- There is differences in the division space too, and **the horizon is often in a curve line** in Pahari Paintings, when it is depicted. This is due to a phenomenon in reality.
- If you look at the horizon flanked by hills from the valley, the horizon does look curved.





# COLOUR THEORY



- The desire to fill as many details as possible in the miniature format left the factor of suggestively un explored in Pahari schools of art.
- Colours plays an important role in composition, and the arrangement of **contrasting colours** is important in the layout of Pahari Paintings.
- The painting are in opaque tempera technique, so colours flowing into another creating a merging effects that we find in water colours is not found here.

## INDEX

- **Introduction**

1. History
2. Material used
3. Process of painting

- **Types of Pahari Paintings**

- Kangra school of paintings
- Geometrical composition
- Spatial construct
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- Palace Inside outside
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# TYPES OF PAHARI PAINTING

## BASOHLI PAINTINGS

- The Basohli town in Himachal Pradesh is known for Basohli Paintings
- This town has created wonderful Devi series, magnificent series of the manifestations of the Supreme Goddess.
- It is also known for the magnificent depiction of the Rasamanjari text.
- Geometrical patterns, bright colors and lustrous enamel depict Basohli paintings.



# TYPES OF PAHARI PAINTING

## GARHWAL PAINTINGS

- Garhwal Paintings started in Himachal Pradesh
- It was initially dominated by the Mughal style
- Later, it began reflecting the simpler version of Kangra traditions.

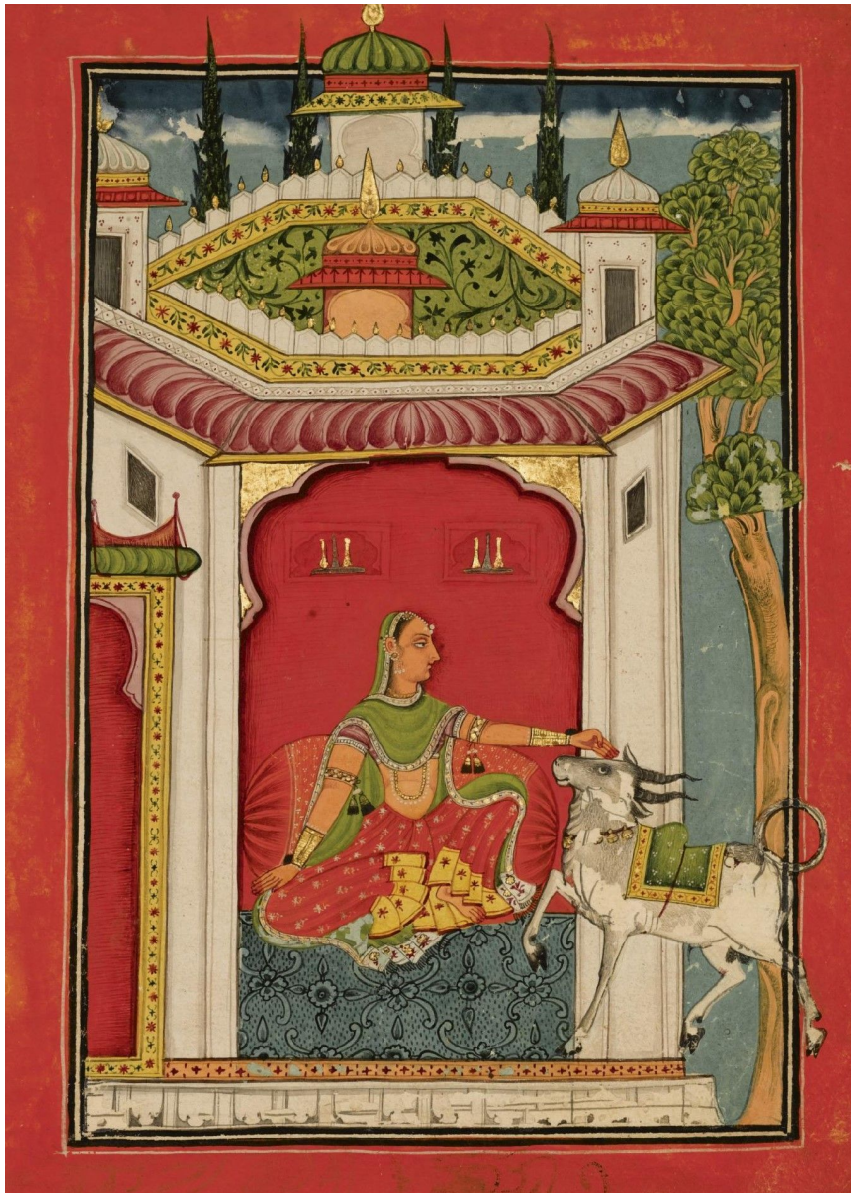




# TYPES OF PAHARI PAINTING

## BILASPUR PAINTINGS

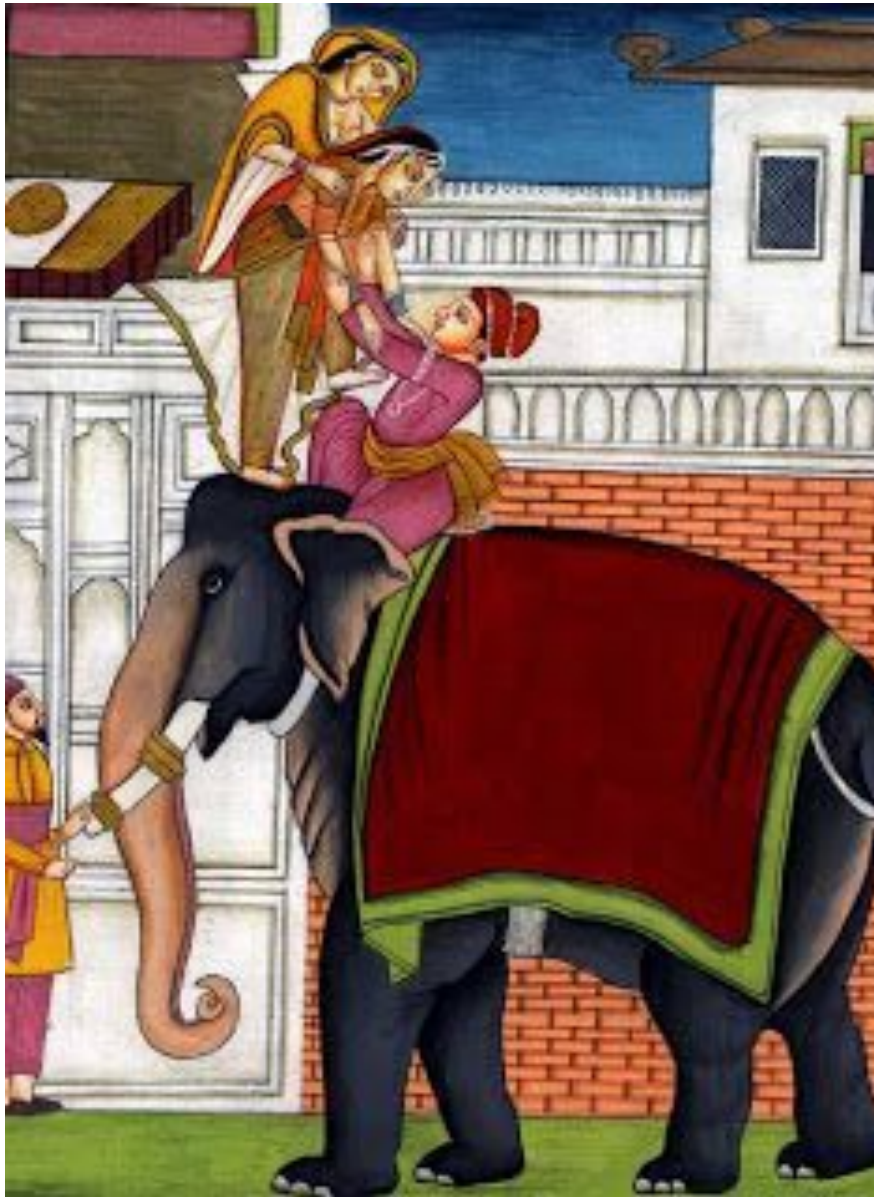
- Bilaspur town is located in Himachal Pradesh.
- This town has witnessed the growth of the Pahari paintings around the mid-17th century.
- Apart from the artworks of the Bhagavata Purana, Ramayana and Ragamala sequence, painters also made paintings on coverlets for sacraments and rituals.



# TYPES OF PAHARI PAINTING

## NURPUR PAINTINGS

- Nurpur paintings are found in Himachal Pradesh
- Nurpur paintings generally employ bright colors and flat backgrounds.
- Later periods, the dazzling colors were substituted by subdued ones.





## INDEX

- **Introduction**

1. History
2. Material used
3. Process of painting

- Types of Pahari Paintings

- **Kangra school of paintings**

- Geometrical composition
- Spatial construct
- Landscape
- Palace Inside outside
- Sacred and profane

# Kangra school of paintings

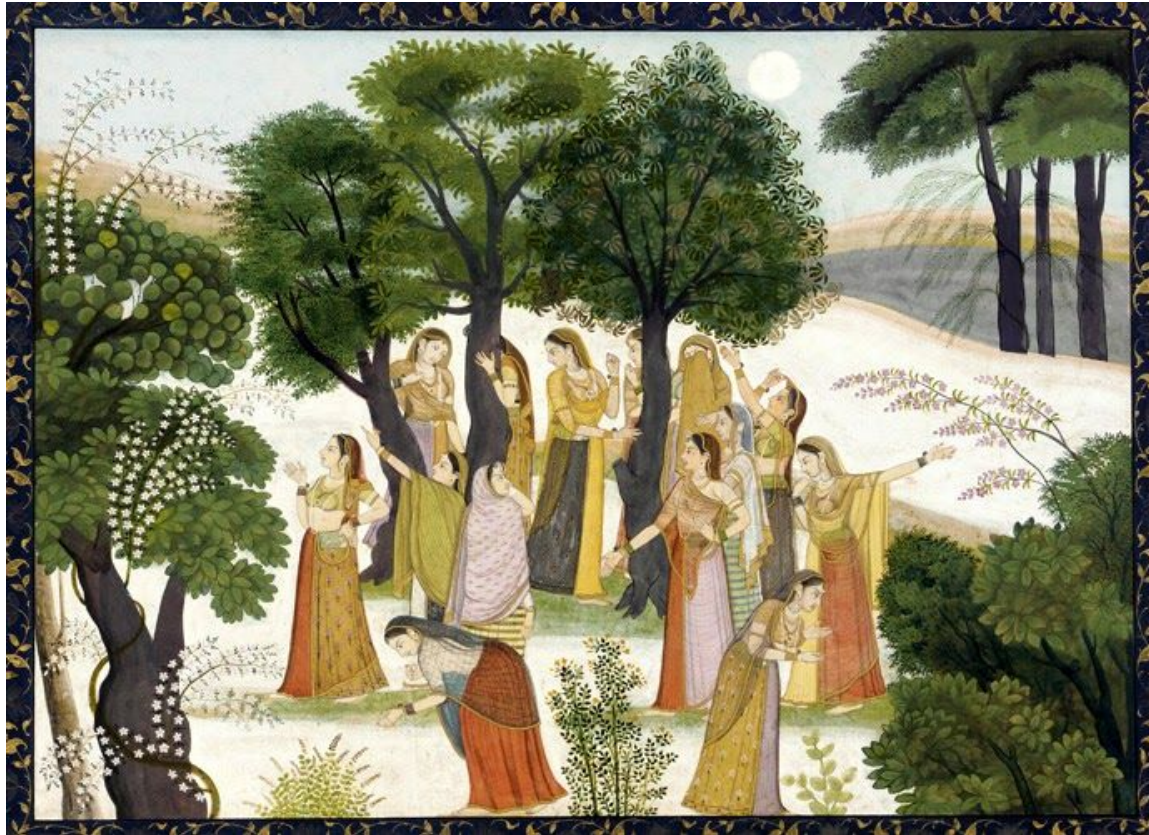
## Introduction and history

Kangra painting is the pictorial art of Kangra, named after Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, a former princely state, which patronized the art, covering the style that was patronized by Rajput rulers between the 17th and 19th centuries.

In the middle of the 18th century A.D. when the plains of Northern India were convulsed by the invasion of Nadir Shah (1739), followed by the incursions of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Raja Govardhan Chand of Haripur Guler gave asylum to refugee artists trained in the Mughal Style of painting. In the inspiring environment of the Punjab Himalayas with their beautiful green hills, the Mughal style with its sensitive naturalism blossomed into the Kangra style. Instead of painting flattering portraits of their masters and hunting scenes, the artists adopted themes from the love poetry of Jayadeva Bihari and Keshav Das who wrote ecstatically of the love of Radha and Krishna. Thus, developed a school of painting with new spirit, whose artistic works are suffused with romantic love and bhakti mysticism.







## Material

Kangra art is essentially an art of the line. This imaging delicacy and fineness of the line was achieved by the use of fine brushes made from the hair of squirrels.

The Kangra painters used colors made of vegetable and mineral extracts. They employed cool and fresh colors. The Kangra painters made use of pure colors like yellow, red and blue and these have retained the brilliance, even after two hundred years.



## Themes

- Painting depicts ideas and values which guided life in society, sentiments and passions pictured in the language of brush and color
- They depict Puranic tales and stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata in minute detail, stories of Nala and Damayanti, and those from Keshavdas's Baramasa.





## Themes

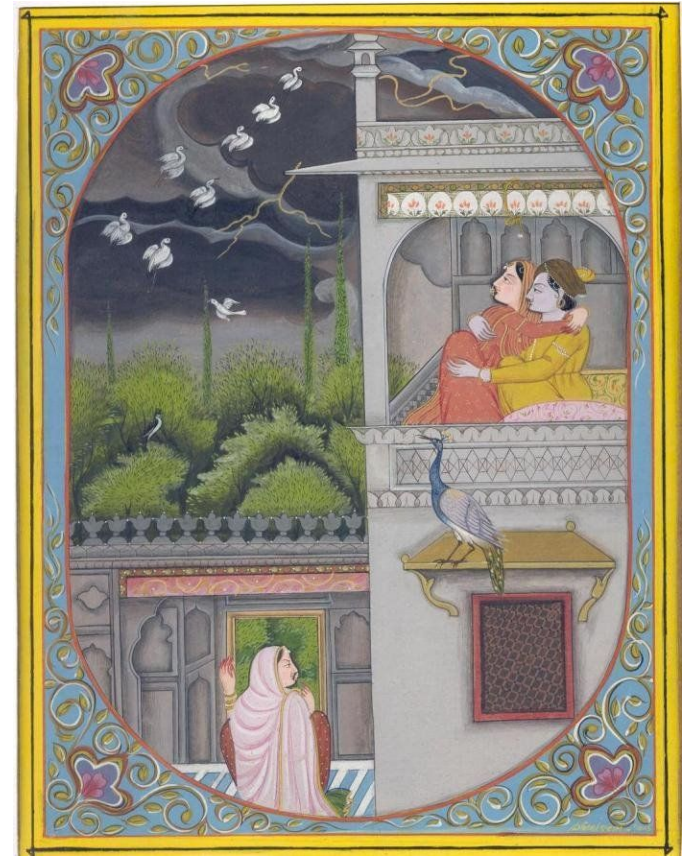
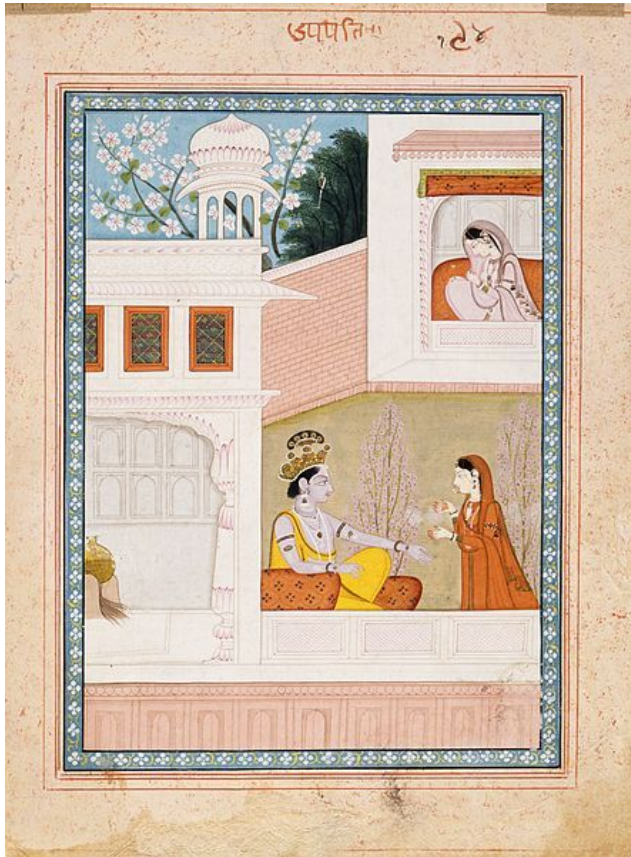
- Sensitive depiction of literary works RasikPriya, Sat Sai and Rasmanjari, GeetGovinda and other works refer to the awareness of people.
- The episodes are most eloquent, colours most vibrant, brilliant and soft. The brush is tender. Nature sublime. Animal & birds find place wherever necessary.



## Themes

Amorous plays of Radha and Krishna symbolising soul's devotion to God. Krishna subjects, known commonly as Krishna-lila predominate, life of the young Krishna, against the Brindavan forest or river Yamuna.





### Themes

The Sat Sai depictions of the legendary lovers, on the other hand, were set against an architectural background with walls, balconies and windows.



## Features

One striking feature of the ancient Indian Kangra paintings is the verdant greenery it depicts. The style is naturalistic, and great attention is paid to detail. The foliage depicted is vast and varied. This is made noticeable by using multiple shades of green. The Kangra paintings feature flowering plants and creepers, leafless trees, rivulets and brooks.

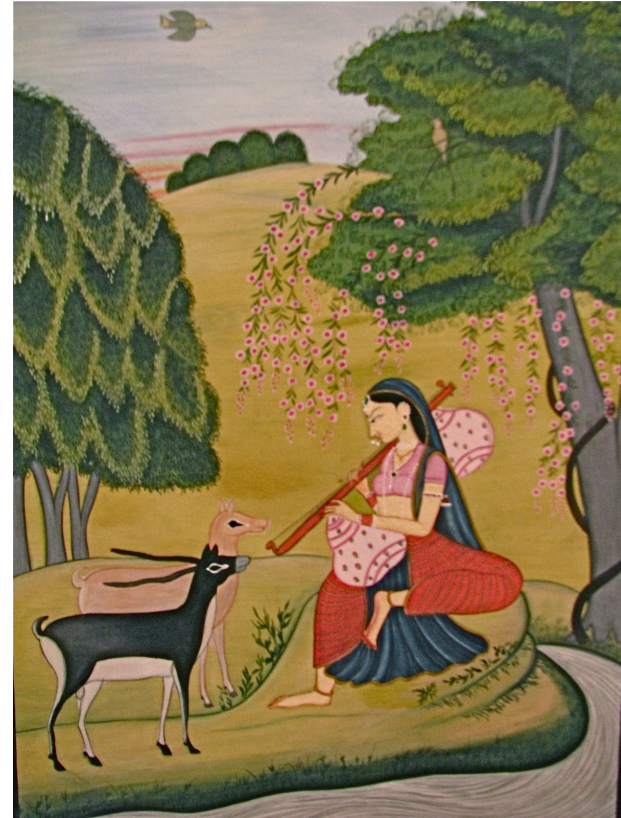




## Features

The Kangra artists adopted various shades of the primary colors and used delicate and fresher hues. For instance, they used a light pink on the upper hills to indicate distance.

## Kangra school of paintings



### Features

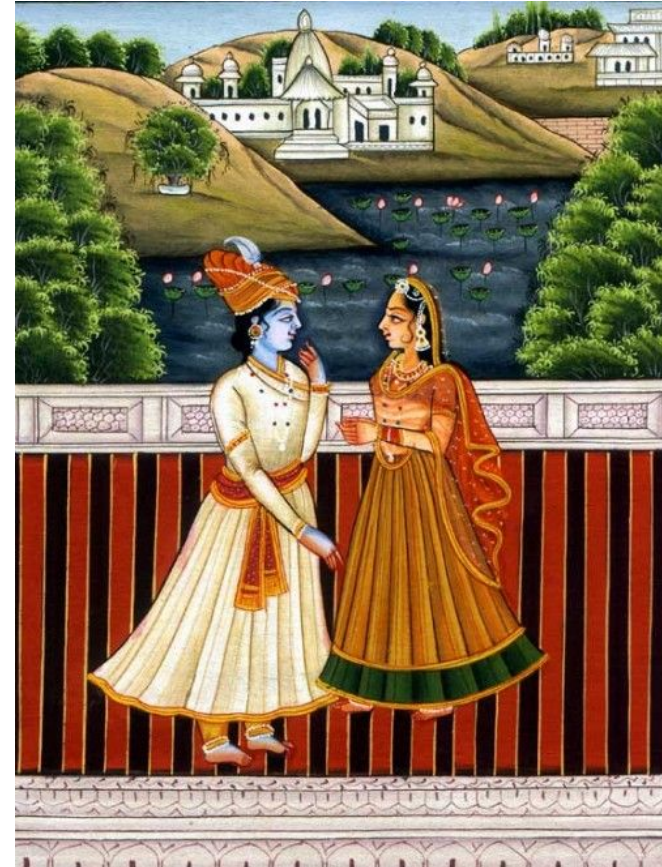
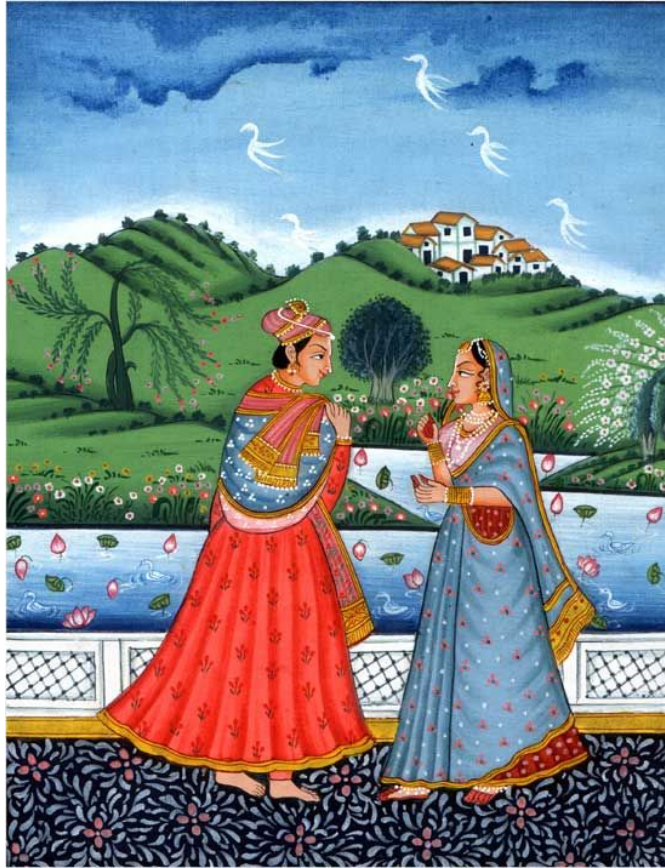
Kangra paintings depict the feminine charm in a very graceful manner. Facial features are soft and refined. The female figures are exceptionally beautiful.





## Features

Later Kangra paintings also depicted nocturnal scenes, and storms and lightning. The paintings were often large and had complex compositions of many figures and elaborate landscapes. Towns and house clusters were often depicted in the distance.



### Spatial Features

The paintings also depicted spaces which were interacting with the nature and often had use of different materials shown. As we can see in the above two paintings, the king and the queen are enjoying the picturesque view of nature from their courtyard which has lake and flowers. The space was used for leisure activities and also for informal meetings.





## Spatial Features

The painting on the left shows the function of window, where Lord Krishna is seen with a Gopi in the window and other village women are watching them. The space becomes a mean of visual interaction.

The other painting shows the use of a common courtyard like area, in between the houses where women are doing leisure activities, it becomes a congregation space.

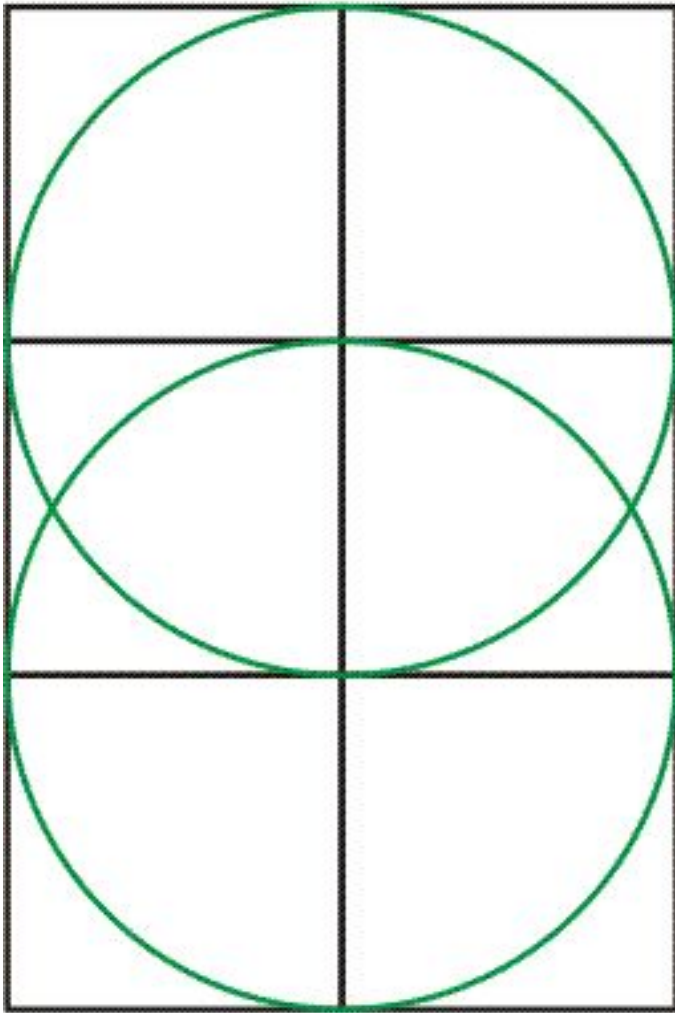
## INDEX

- Introduction
  1. History
  2. Material used
  3. Process of painting
- Types of Pahari Paintings
- Kangra school of paintings
- **Geometrical composition**
- Spatial construct
- Landscape
- Palace Inside outside
- Sacred and profane



# Geometric Composition

(KURMA THE TORTOISE - INCARNATION OF VISHNU)



Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings

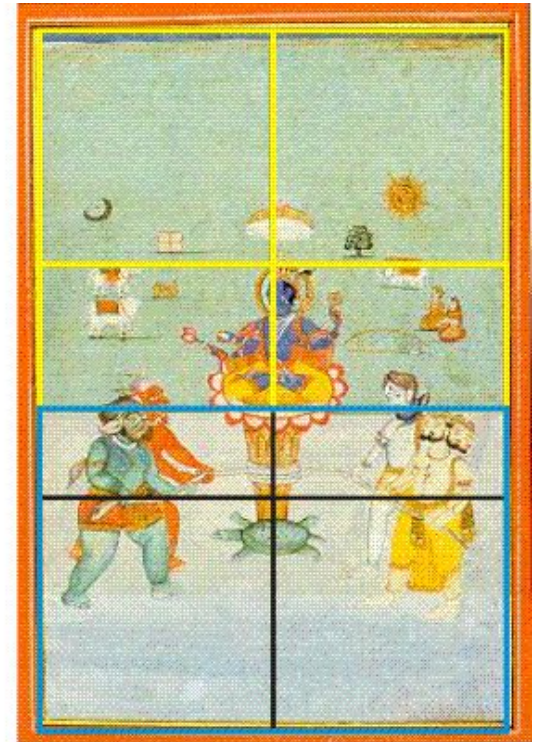
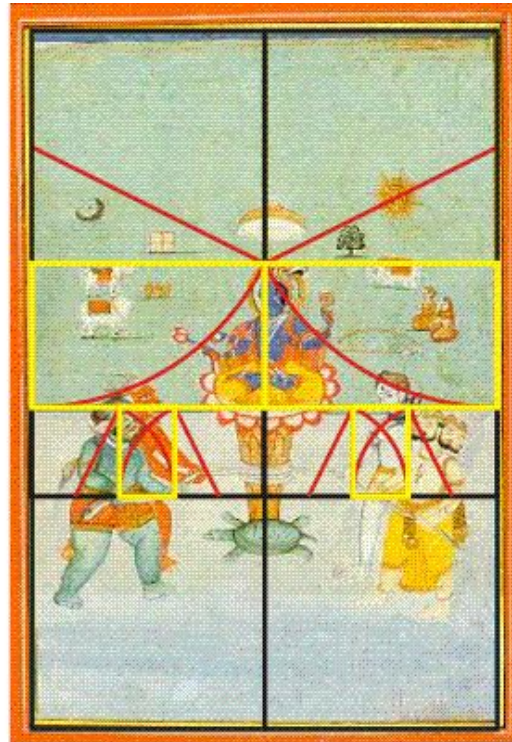
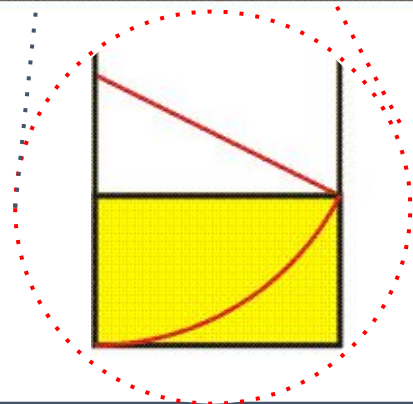
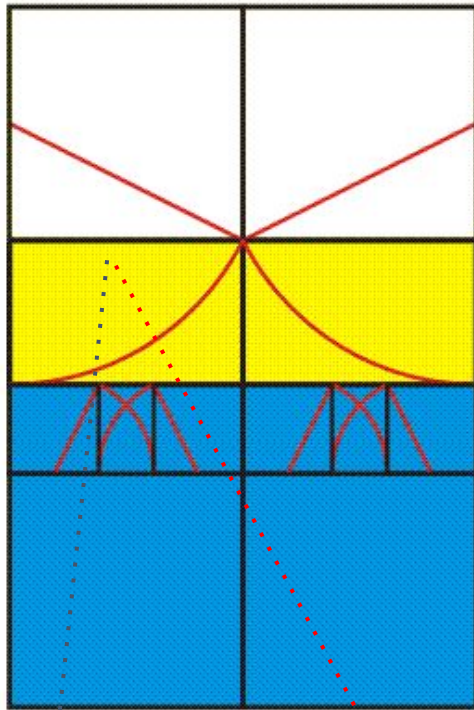
## TWO BY THREE RECTANGLES AND CIRCULAR DIVISION

- In ancient India, sacred literature and poetry was always composed, down to the level of the syllable, with particular mathematical rhythms which produce certain feelings.
- The overall painting (within the frame) is composed a two-by-three rectangle. Two-by-three is a musical ratio.
- Painting shows two-by-three rectangle. Notice how it is also the ratio around the two intersecting circles of the Hindu *Mandorla* ("almond", known in the West as the *Vesica Piscis*, "bladder of the fish"). It is a symbol of the polarity of creation and is the basis of geometric construction.
- Thus, it's symbolically appropriate for the theme of this painting, the back-and-forth churning of the cosmic ocean to create ambrosia.
- The two-by-three grid overlaid upon the painting. Notice how the top of Vishnu's crown is two-thirds of the way up the painting, at the top of the lower circle, reinforcing the musical "perfect fifth".
- The lowest part of the upper circle shows the rope as a chord of the circle.



# Geometric Composition

(KURMA THE TORTOISE - INCARNATION OF VISHNU)



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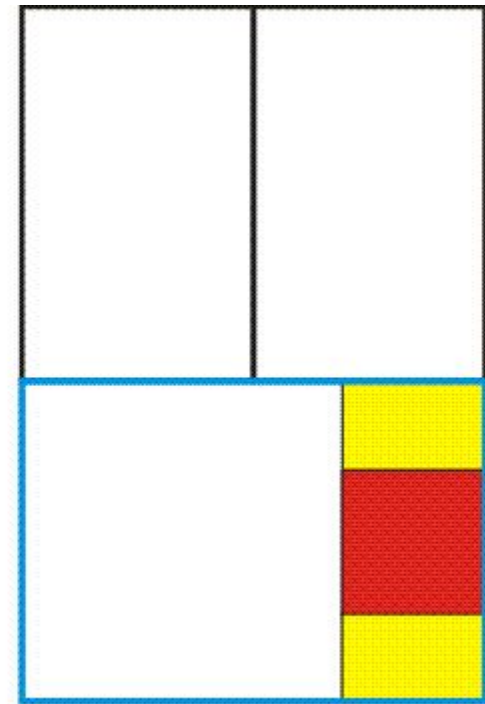
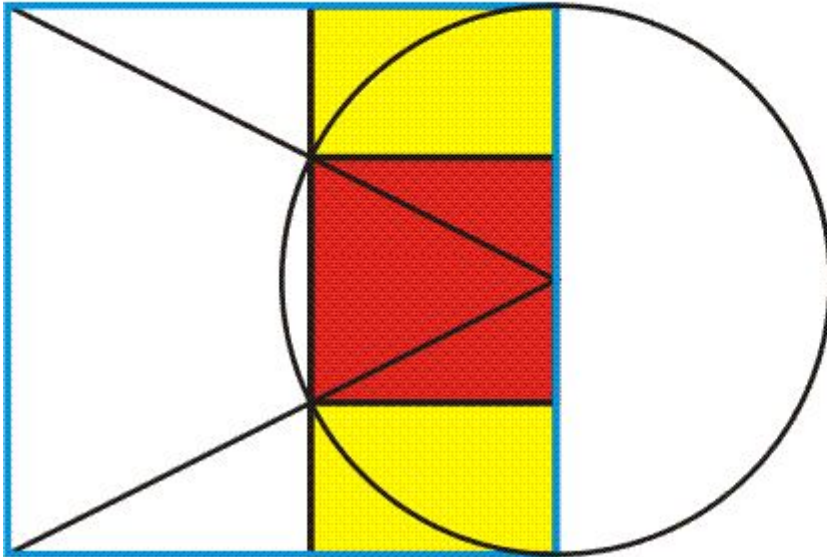
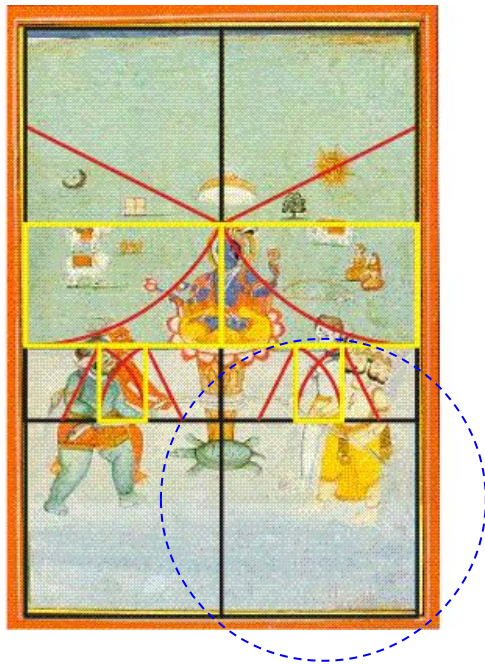
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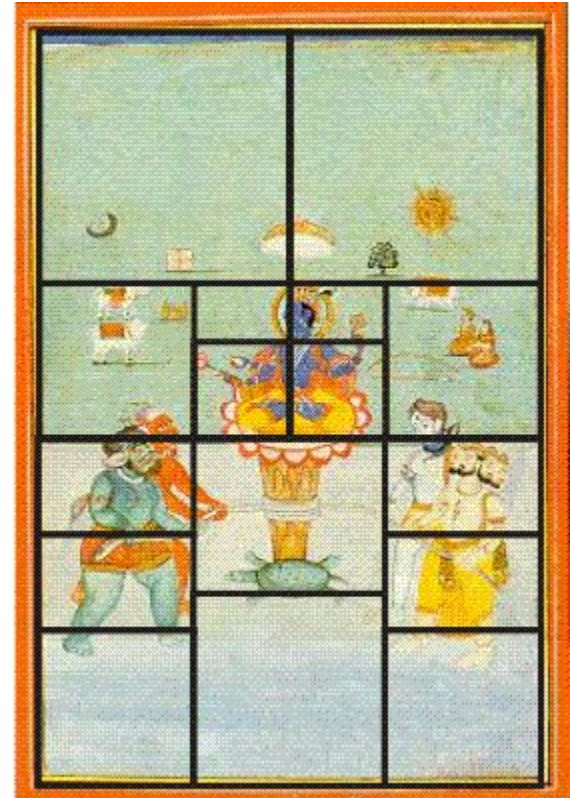
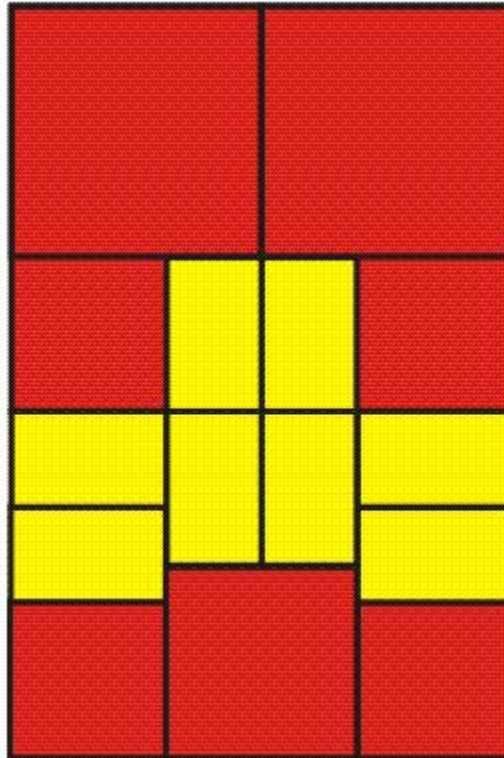
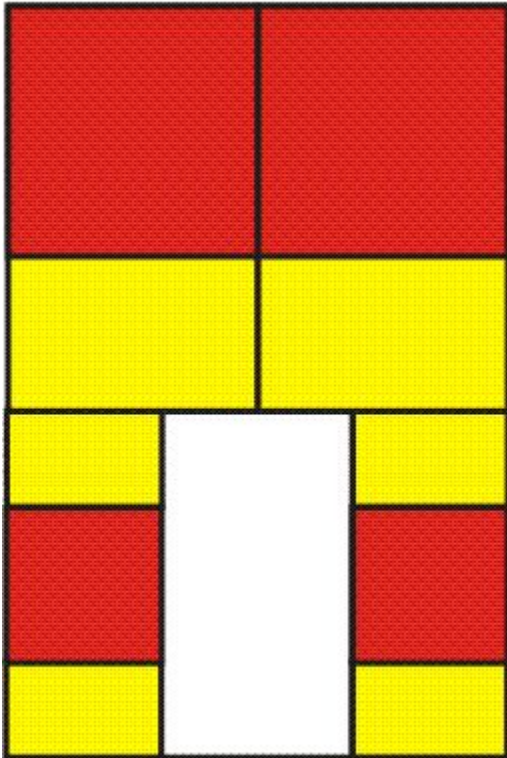
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COLLEGE PROJECTS  
SEM VII, IX 20-21



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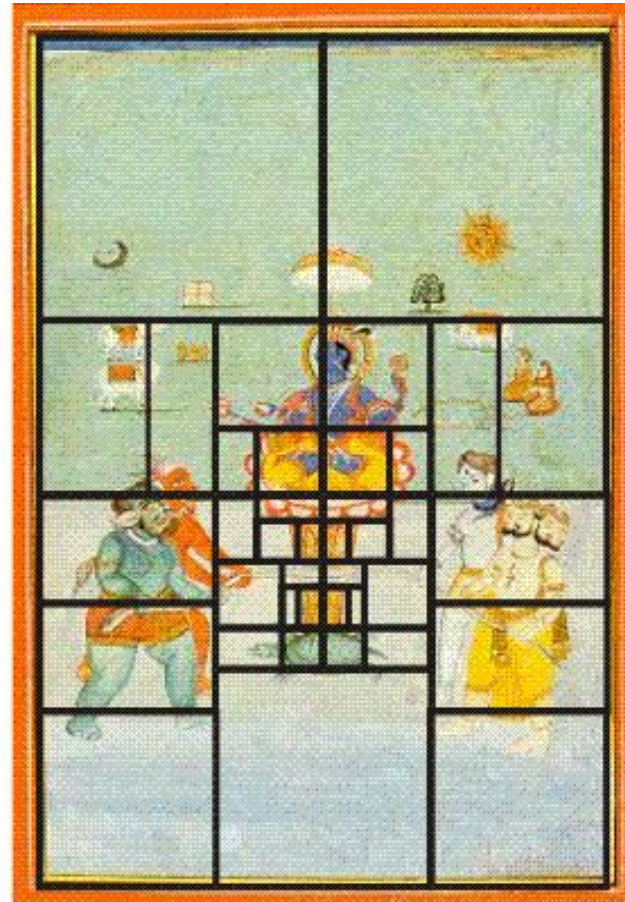
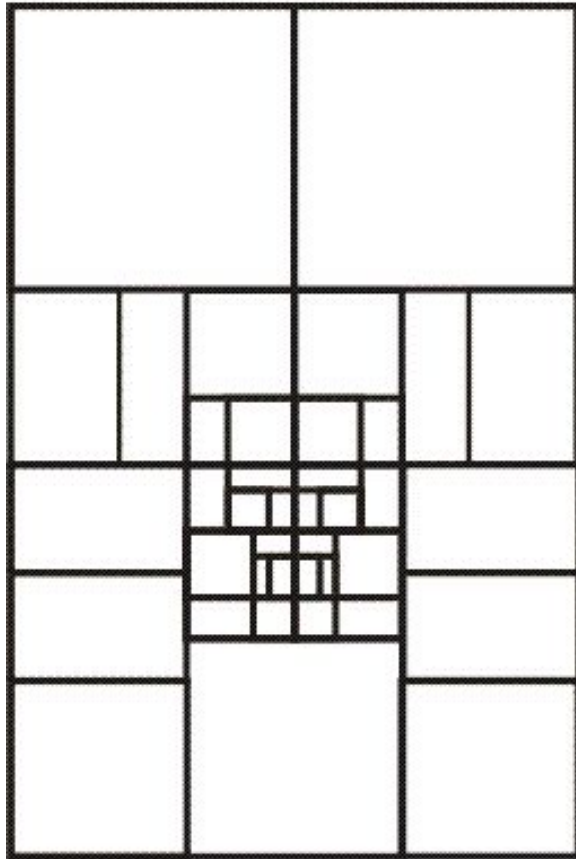
(KURMA THE TORTOISE - INCARNATION OF VISHNU)



Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings

# Geometric Composition

(KURMA THE TORTOISE - INCARNATION OF VISHNU)



It's always geometrically possible to divide any Golden Rectangle or square into smaller Golden Rectangles and squares. But it's impossible to know the degree of geometric detail to which the designer of this painting took it. One analysis (below) seems to indicate that each of the central elements of the tortoise, shaft, rope, lotus and Vishnu was carefully proportioned to maintain the coherent balance provided by Golden Mean geometry.

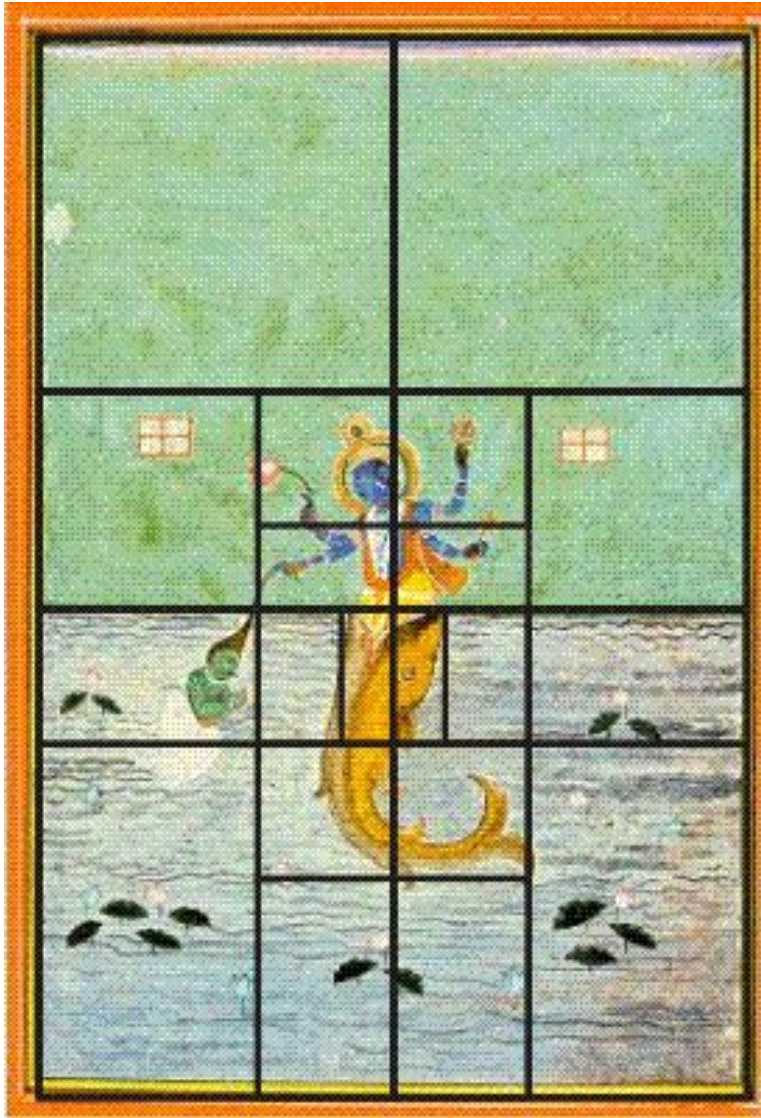


## GOLDEN RECTANGLE THEORY

- What about the inner green and blue rectangles representing the land and ocean? Their interface isn't clearly indicated by the two-by-three grid or its simple divisions.
- But the marvel of these designs is found in the ways that this simple, rational, two-by-three grid is further subdivided.
- The secret here is to extend the top two squares to become two Golden Rectangles. Below, left, we see the simple development of the square into Golden Rectangle. A red "diagonal" from the middle of the left side to an opposite corner swings an arc downward, giving us the yellow rectangle, a Golden Rectangle.
- The whole is also a Golden Rectangle. The second illustration shows this construction applied to both squares at the top of the two-by-three grid.
- Now we clearly see that the painting's top green area is framed as two side-by-side Golden Rectangles. The narrow horizontal rectangle below each yellow rectangle, but above the lowest squares, is equal to two small squares plus a smaller Golden Rectangle, or a square plus horizontal Golden Rectangle.
- The third illustration overlays this geometry onto the painting. In the final illustration we see the remaining rectangle framing the blue ocean. This scheme is the essential geometric armature on which a number of paintings in this series were composed, although with clever and beautiful variations. From here we can look further into its geometric composition.

# Geometric Composition

(VISHNU IN HIS INCARNATION AS THE FISH MATSYA SAVING A DEVOTEE)



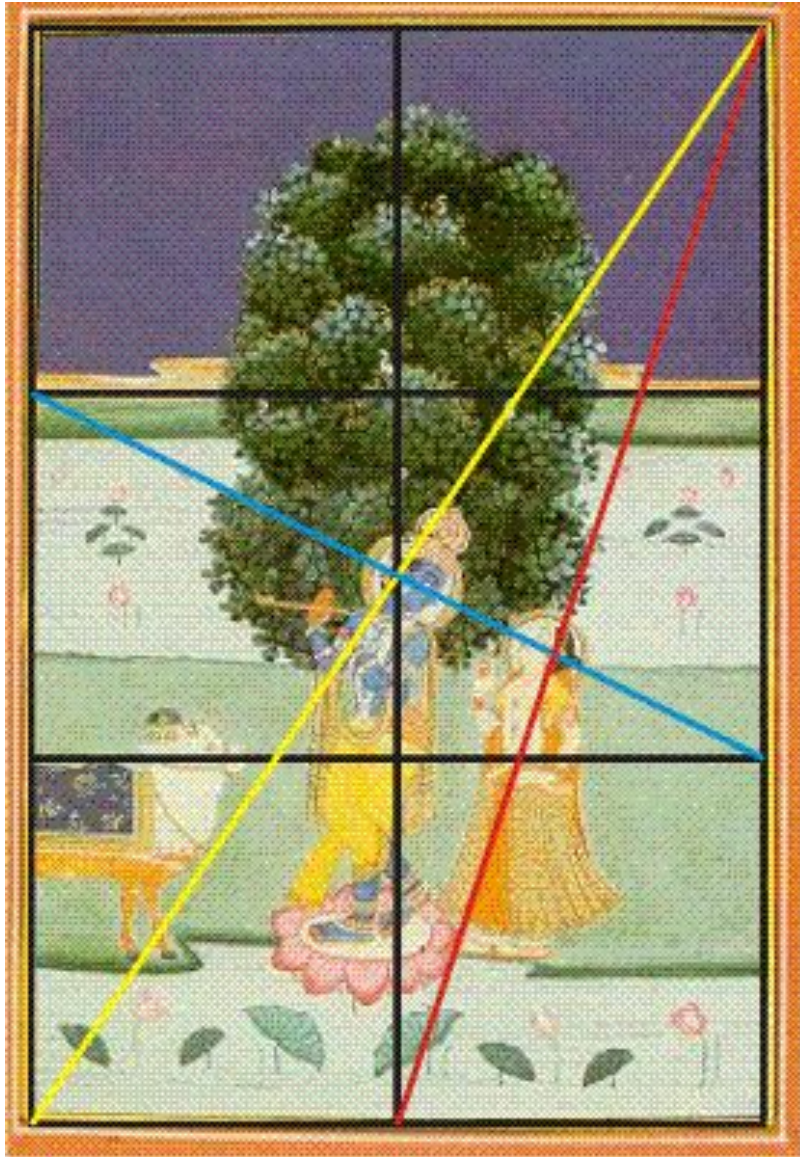
- The painting showing Vishnu in his incarnation as the fish Matsya saving a devotee.
- The geometry is essentially identical with that of the previous painting, with two Golden Rectangles over another rectangle.

Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings



# Geometric Composition

(KRISHNA PLAYING FLUTE FOR HIS LOVE SITA).



- Vishnu in his 19th incarnation as Krishna playing the flute for his love Sita.
- It, too, is framed in a musical two-by-three rectangle grid. Notice how its very simplest diagonals emphasize their hearing: the blue diagonal joins Krishna's and Sita's ears, while the yellow and red diagonals cross the blue line precisely at each of their ears. In fact, Krishna's ear is at the exact center of the entire painting.

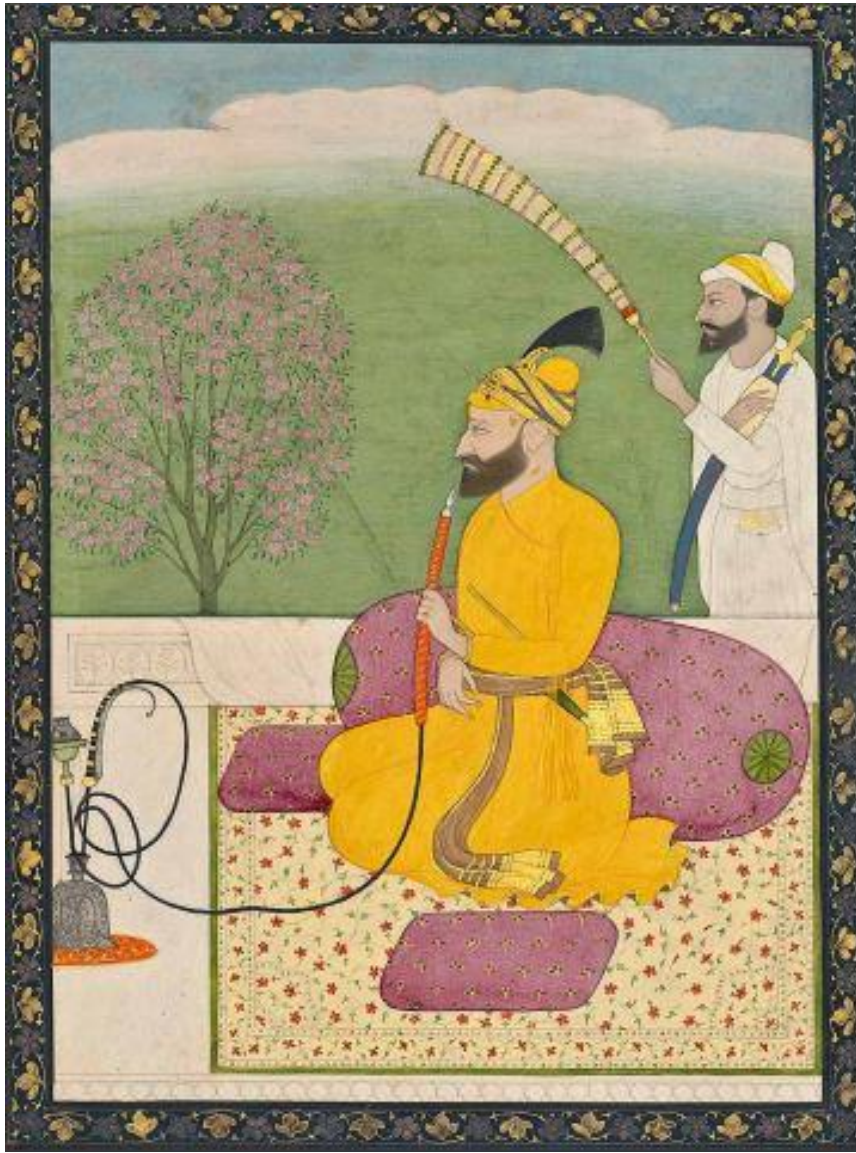
Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings

## INDEX

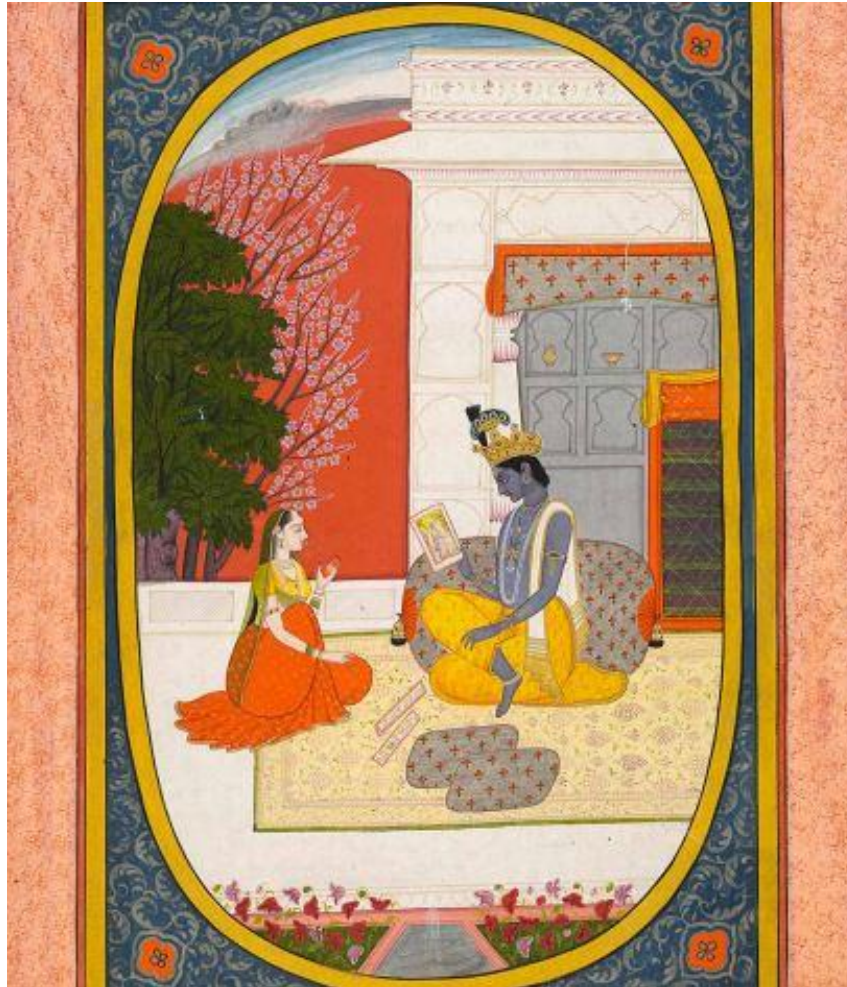
- Introduction
  1. History
  2. Material used
  3. Process of painting
- Types of Pahari Paintings
- Kangra school of paintings
- Geometrical composition
- **Spatial construct**
- Landscape
- Palace Inside outside
- Sacred and profane



## Spatial Constructs



- The painting shows, Raja Raj Singh of Chamba smoking on a Terrace.
- Terraces were mainly used for outdoor activities such as music, leisure etc. We can observe many paintings showing kings often smoking hookah, having drinks etc. on the semi open spaces. They usually had chhatris over them and intricate carpets below, with their fan man and other ministers in company.
- Terraces were also viewing points for the beautiful views around the palaces. We can see many trees and a scenic view of the mountains in many such pahari paintings.



- Krishna sits on the terrace rapt in admiration of the picture of his beloved that her friend has brought to him.
- The white stuccoed pavilion behind him has a silver brocade awning rolled up over the arched opening, while a doorway within the chamber concealed by a bamboo blind with richly coloured slats leads through the grey wall with its arched niches. Beyond the terrace rise a dark green tree and a prunus covered with white blossom.
- The beautifully drawn and painting composition conforms to Purkhu's penchant for depicting only a shallow space, here reinforced by the vivid red ground that does duty for a landscape.
- So the terrace is depicted in a different way i.e the space is used for leisure activities like how Lord Krishna is seen enjoying his time.



## INDEX

- Introduction
  1. History
  2. Material used
  3. Process of painting
- Types of Pahari Paintings
- Kangra school of paintings
- Geometrical composition
- Spatial construct
- **Landscape**
- Palace Inside outside
- Sacred and profane

# Features of Kangra Paintings Regarding Landscape

- One striking feature of Kangra paintings is **the verdant greenery** it depicts. The style is naturalistic, and great attention is paid to detail. The foliage depicted is **vast and varied**. This is made noticeable by using **multiple shades of green**. The Kangra paintings feature flowering plants and creepers, leafless trees, rivulets, and brooks.
- The Kangra artists adopted various shades of the primary colors and used delicate and fresher hues. For instance, they used a light pink on the upper hills to indicate distance.
- Kangra paintings depict the feminine charm in a very graceful manner. Facial features are soft and refined. The female figures are exceptionally beautiful.
- Later Kangra paintings also depicted **nocturnal scenes, and storms, and lightning**. The paintings were often large and had complex compositions of many figures and elaborate landscapes. Towns and house clusters were often depicted in the distance.
- The Kangra painters used colors made of **vegetable and mineral extracts**. They employed cool and fresh colors. Kangra paintings are known for the lyrical blending of form and color.





- The earliest paintings in miniature style originated in Basohli from where the style spread to the hill states of Mankot, Nurpur, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur, Nalagarh, Chamba, Guler and Kangra. The Pahari art flourished in picturesque places of great natural beauty, the low hills of the Himalayas, the natural landscape only served as the backdrop. It often indicated a subtle change of mood.
- The landscapes of Pahari painters were not based totally on imagination. They believed that a work of art should be both imitative and imaginative. The Pahari artists illustrated Hills, Shrubs, flowering trees of the region but composed them according to their own choice. The use of natural scenes was to present the main theme as the suitable background for them.
- For Pahari Artists Nature and Art are part and parcel for each other. Nature supplies the ground for art and the artist's duty is to interpret nature, not to copy the outer appearances only.

## Landscape

**Landscape as a medium to portray subtle changes of light:**

The Pahari artist had acquired a sure sense of tonal values of colour to express the subtle changes of light. It is evident from 'Nayika' series of paintings. The tonal values change gradually in the foreground to convey light and exposure in harmony with human feelings.



Nayika paintings





## The south wind cool itself in the snow of the Himalayas- 1730 A.D., Basohli

### Pure landscape:

This painting is the only example of pure landscape by Basohli artists, in which human figures are not shown. Their conception of sandal trees which are found in Mysore state of south India is purely imaginary. As these artists lived in the outer hills, they also had no idea of Himalayan glaciers and alpine vegetation. This explains the manner in which they have painted the snow in the crags of mountains and the trees. This is one of the illustrations of Gita Govinda.

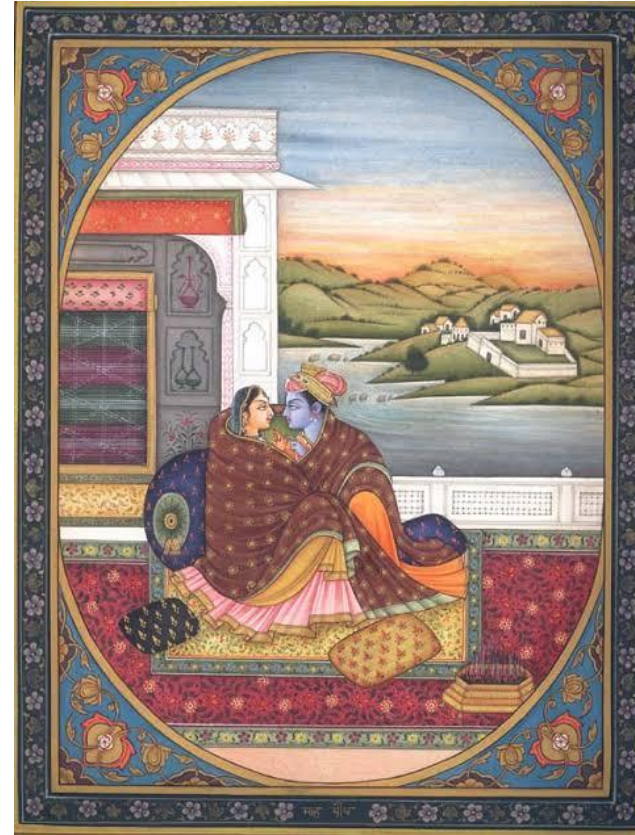


**A painting by Nainsukh**

**Landscape as background in portraits:**

Paintings are not only naturalistic but very rich, bright and soothing. Manku and Nainsukh were among the best painters. Nainsukh probably the court painter of Balwant Singh often used landscapes beautifully in soft colours in the background of many portraits.

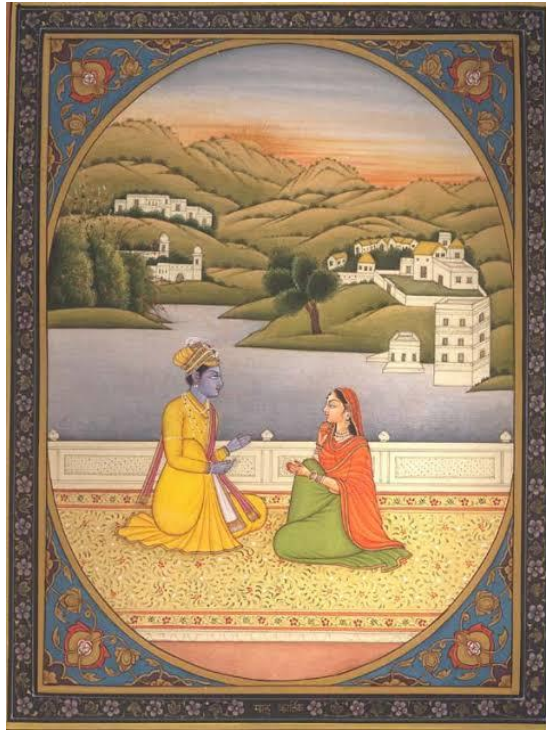




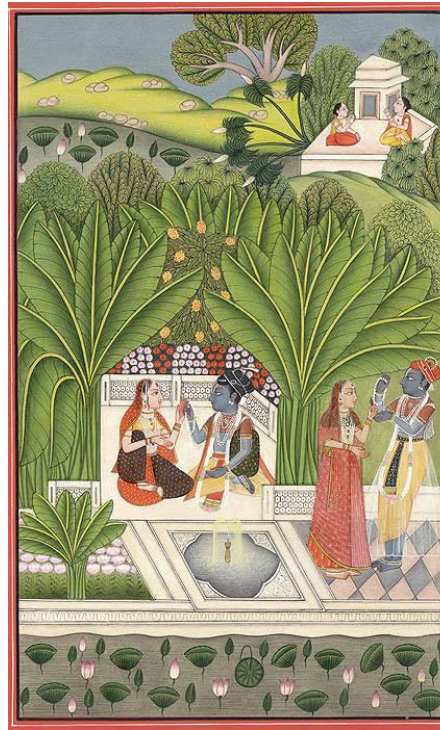
- **Baramasa paintings- Paush**

**Landscape for interpretation of months:**

In Baramasa illustrations, the landscape element come in vivid forms, splendid views of changing nature in the hills during twelve months. In most of the paintings background is full of different colourful or more sophisticated trees and flowering plants but there is also an intermediate stage when half of the scene is occupied by natural surroundings and other half by architectural motifs. In some cases canopies are introduced in landscape settings.



**Kartik**



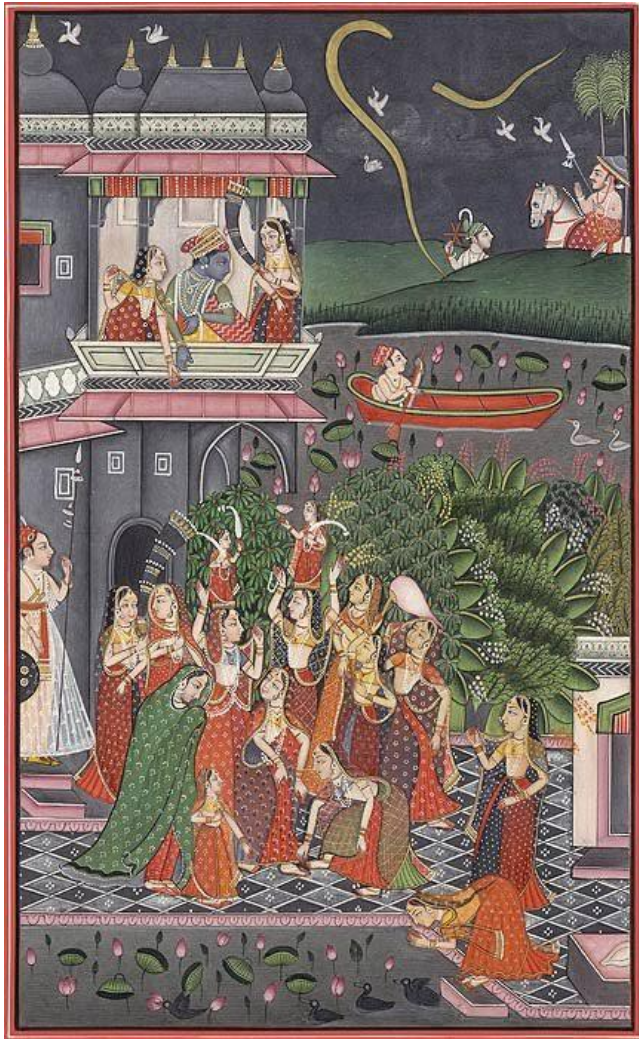
**Chaitra**



**Margashirsh**

- **Baramasa paintings**





**Shravan**



**Magha**

- **Baramasa paintings**

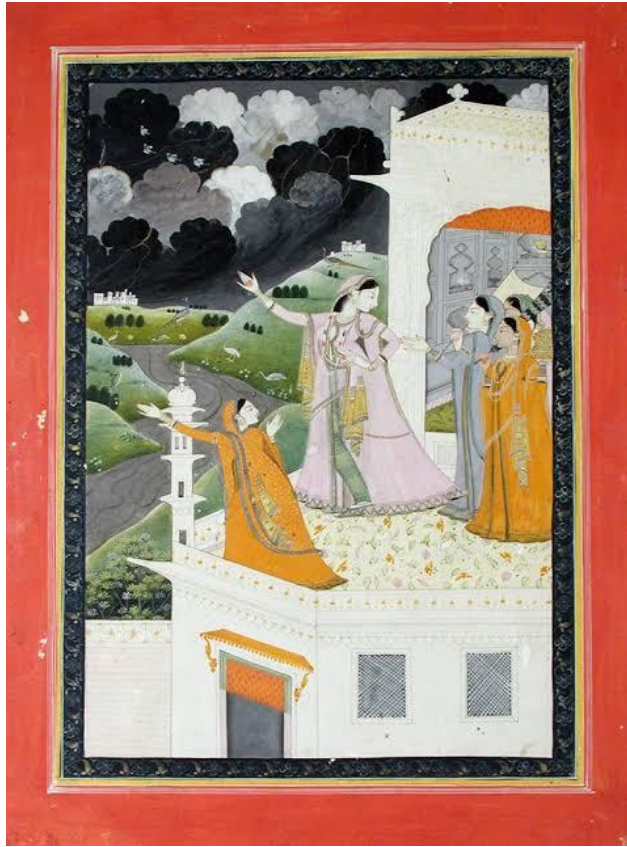


- **Basohli painting with forest as background**

## Forest as background:

In Basohli paintings, a dense forest with beautifully formed trees was a suitable background in many paintings.





**Mughal painting**



**Pahari painting**

## Mughal influence:

The Mughal influence was absorbed at each centre of Pahari Painting, differently and accepted according to the local taste and capacity. In some paintings of Guler-Kangra tradition we find a particular treatment of the cloud of Mughal tradition.





**In Raagmala series the trees are more stylized.**



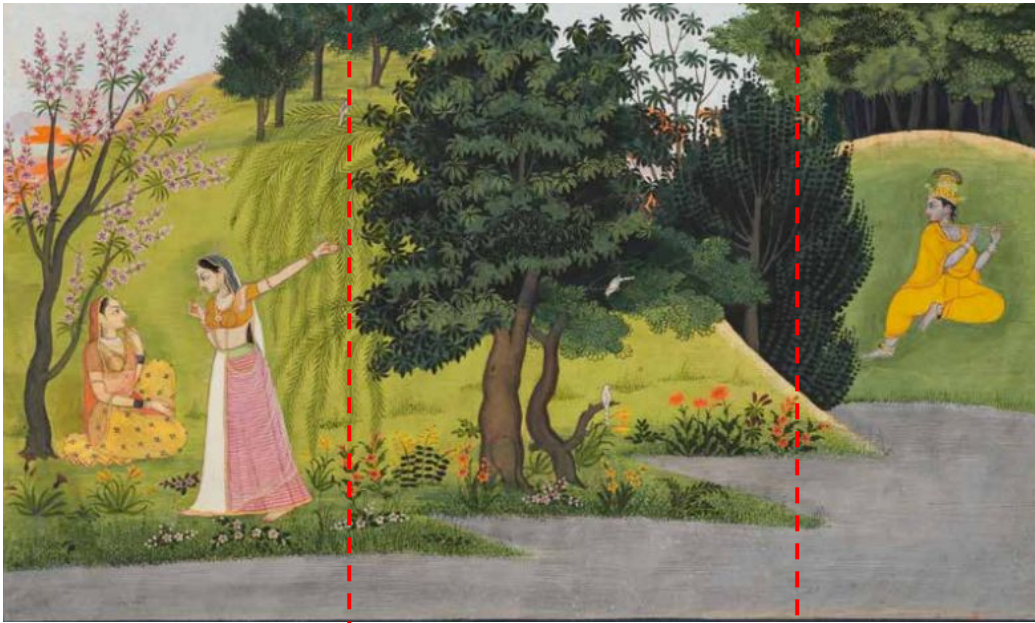
**The trees with large and decorating leaves are a distinctive feature of the Bilaspur style landscape painting.**





## Garhwal paintings:

In Garhwal School, landscape painting was based on the Kangra tradition. In most of the paintings, the whole background is filled with flowering trees and shrubs.



## Garhwal paintings:

The series from which this painting come is one of the most beautiful and important of all the Pahari series. It is often referred to as the **'Tehri Garhwal'** Gitagovinda after its find spot, or the **'Early Kangra'** Gitagovinda, as it was long considered along with the Bhagavata Purana and Ramayana in similar style as being the first fruits of the newly emerging school of Kangra artists under Guler influence.





**Hanuman jumps back across the ocean from Lanka to Mount Mahendra:**



## Nand, Yashoda and Krishna with Kinsmen going to Vrindavana

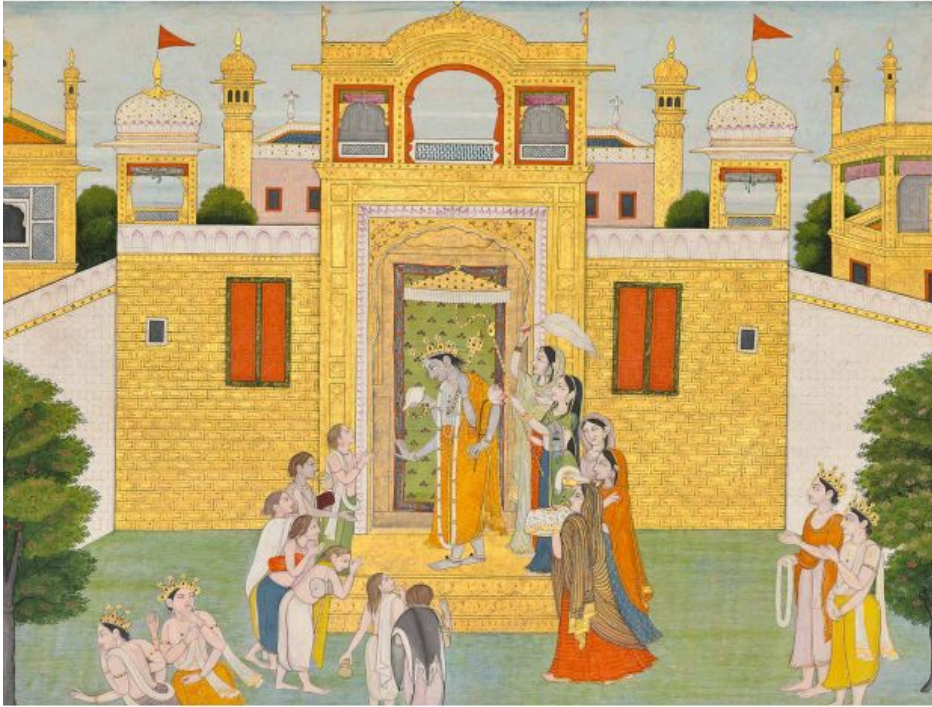
Based on the episode of Bhagavata Purana and painted in **Kangra style**, this painting is **tender, placid and bewitching**.



## INDEX

- Introduction
  1. History
  2. Material used
  3. Process of painting
- Types of Pahari Paintings
- Kangra school of paintings
- Geometrical composition
- Spatial construct
- Landscape
- **Palace Inside outside**
- Sacred and profane

## Palace Inside Outside



**Vishnu outside his Vaikuntha Palace with other Gods and Attendants**

- The palace behind them has a frontal elevation of gold bricks laid in staggered rows, punctuated by two large and two small openings, the former closed by wooden red shutters.
- The façade is unusually symmetrical with a Bengali-roofed naqqar khana over a great arched doorway at the centre and a chattri at each of the front corners.
- The courtyard behind ends in an enclosed block with the visible part of its elevation consisting of an upper storey with nine windows in arched niches and golden corner turrets with domed chattris. Only at either side beyond the walls is the architectural symmetry broken by a two storeyed pavilion with slightly differing details



## Palace Inside Outside



- The scene is set on the terrace outside a pavilion, with a distant view of gentle hills and an evening sky. Radha is crouched on a chauki on a terrace.
- Krishna is portrayed below the terrace, swathed in his usual peacock feathered crown and a saffron robe and dupatta, and intently observes the scene before him.

**Krishna observes Radha's Toilette Page from the 'Tehri-Garhwal' Satsai of Bihari**



## The Month Of Paus

Baramasa of Keshavdas, describing the twelve months of the year. The month illustrated is Pausa (Dec.-Jan.), when it is intensely cold in Kangra hills.



## The Message Of Eyes

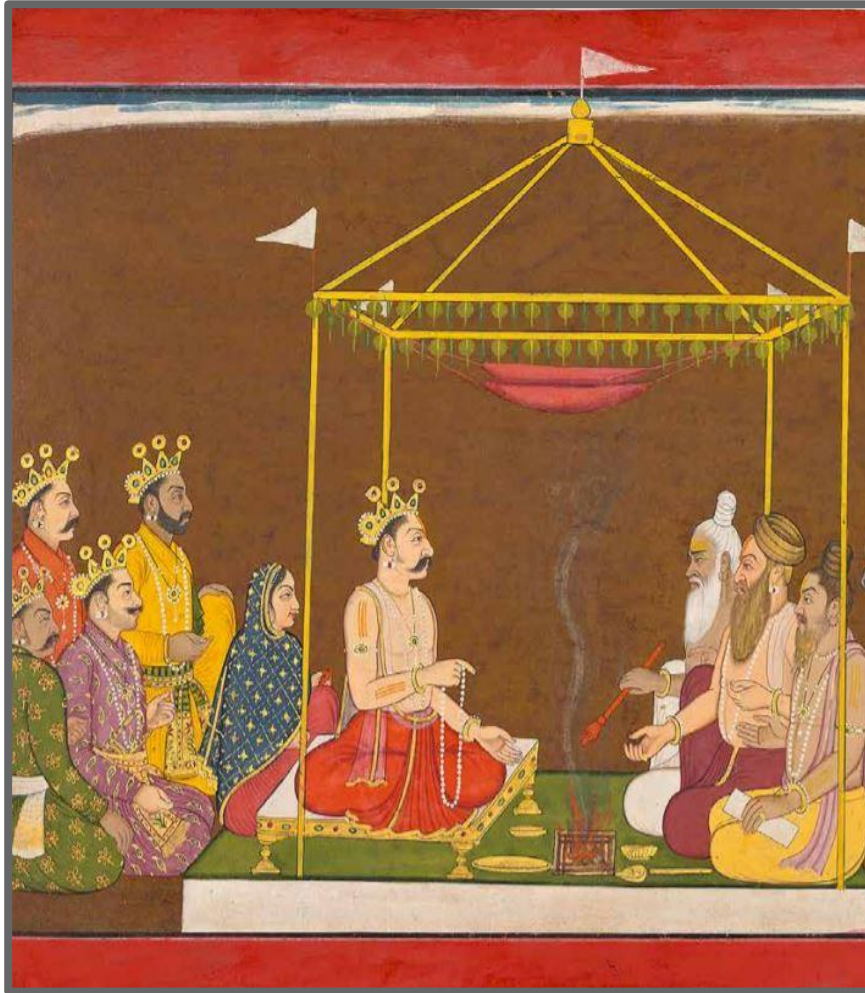
Krishna is shown seated in a window overlooking an open verandah. Radha has averted her face and is looking at Krishna. On the sides are sakhis talking to each other. Theme: secrecy of love in crowded hall.



## INDEX

- Introduction
  1. History
  2. Material used
  3. Process of painting
- Types of Pahari Paintings
- Kangra school of paintings
- Geometrical composition
- Spatial construct
- Landscape
- Palace Inside outside
- **Sacred and profane**
- Kangra school of paintings

## Sacred and Profane



King Yudhishtira sits within a sacrificial enclosure facing the three Brahmins who are performing the sacrifice by adding offerings to the sacred fire. Behind the Brahmins stands the white horse that will be duly sacrificed. Yudhishtira is supported by his four brothers – Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva – and their common wife Draupadi. The composition has a geometrical simplicity of construction and is perfectly balanced, the plain bright colours of the participants' clothes standing out against the brown background. Streaks of white and blue at the top indicate the sky. Yudhishtira, Draupadi and the Brahmins are seated on a small platform under the framework of a pandal adorned with sacred leaves and white pennants, one of which obtrudes into the upper margin. The page comes from the large series known as the 'Small' Guler Bhagavata Purana series. Archer (1973, vol. 1, p. 51)



## Sacred and Profane



The story of King Satyavrata occurs in the last canto of Book 8 of the Bhagavata Purana, and tells how Vishnu was first incarnated to save the earth. The pious king of the Dravida country, Satyavrata, intent on performing penance by the sea shore and subsisting only on water, inadvertently caught a tiny fish. Unwilling to harm it, he kept it in a container, but day after day the fish grew bigger and bigger and the king ran out of containers that could hold it. Recognising that the fish must be a powerful god, he worshipped it as Vishnu, who then revealed to him that he was indeed Vishnu and that he had come to save him from the upcoming mighty flood that would cover the earth when Brahma was asleep. Satyavrata became Manu, the first man, and when the flood came he gathered up the seven sages and examples of all living things and took them into the boat that miraculously appeared. Vishnu appeared again as a great fish and using the snake Vasuki as a towing rope, towed the boat through the night of Brahma until that god awoke again and resumed his creation duties

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THANK YOU

Indian arts

Space in Pahari Miniature Paintings

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