

this gallery. The early *Gita Govinda*, c.1525 A.D. comprises of 159 paintings and is acknowledged a landmark of transition from Western Indian or Jaina style to early Rajasthani Painting perhaps experimented in Gujarat. It is a living document of the shared culture and tradition of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

On the ground floor a few high quality Jaina miniature paintings introduce to the visitors, the apparent contribution of Gujarat to the development of Indian painting. Then follows the display of Rajasthani paintings belonging to sub-schools of Mewar, Bundi, Kotah, Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaipur, including few Mughal period portraits.

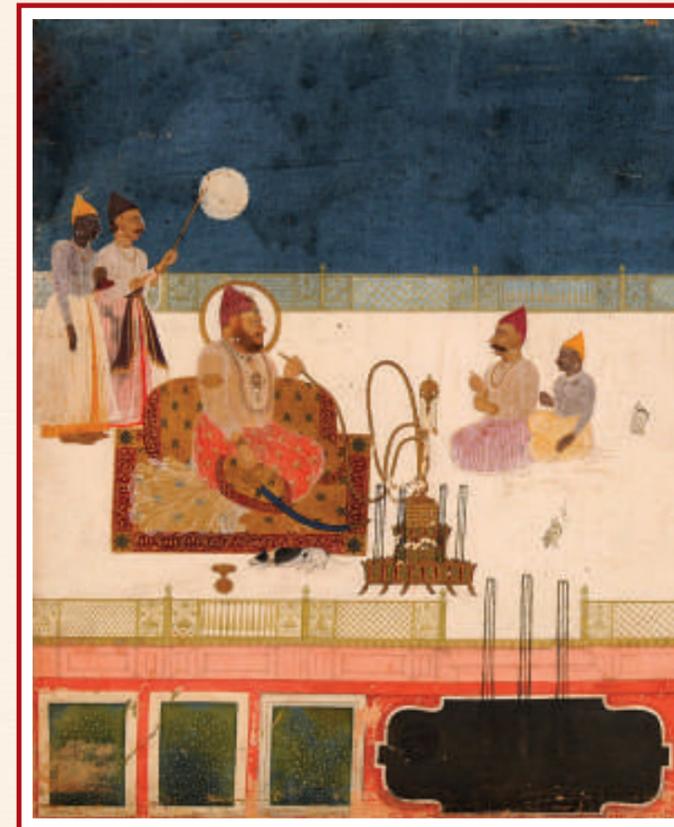


Veiled Radha being led to meet Krishna, Folio from Gita Govinda, Guler Kalam, Pahari; c.1765-1770 A.D.

The first floor gallery now houses a large collection of Pahari paintings. These include some of the masterpieces of Basohli, Guler, Kulu-Mandi, Nurpur, Kangra, and other schools. In the Pahari section, the bright glowing colours and staring eye of the Basohli *Gita Govinda* stand in striking contrast to the soft, mellow, rhythmic and lyrical paintings of the Guler *Gita Govinda*. Also on view are a number of Kangra drawings of epics like the *Ramayana* and other subjects in black ink on off-white paper. The collection includes rare paintings

from Malwa and Bundelkhand (Orccha and Datia). Some unique court paintings of Orccha and Datia rulers are displayed for the first time on this floor.

The table showcases have miscellaneous material which includes folios of Jaina manuscripts, painted *Pothis*, painted book covers, *Farmans* and manuscripts of Qurans in beautiful Persian calligraphy. The collection includes over 1200 paintings. Of these between 250 - 300 are on display at any given time due to constraints of space. Together, with the paintings in Muni Punyavijayaji Collection and drawings in the Kasturbhai Collection, displayed in the L.D. Museum, it represents the largest collection of Indian paintings in Ahmedabad.



Maharaja Savant Simh Listening to Music, Orcha, Bundelkhand; c.1752-1765 A.D. (detail)

List of Trustees

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Publication Available:

- Pahari Miniature Paintings in the N.C. Mehta Collection by Karl J. Khandalavala
- N.C. Mehta Collection Vol.I, Gujarati School and Jaina Manuscript Paintings by Prof. Ratan Parimoo

Forthcoming

- N.C. Mehta Collection Vol.II, Rajasthani, Central India and Mughal School Paintings by Prof. Ratan Parimoo

Entry Free

Tuesday to Sunday

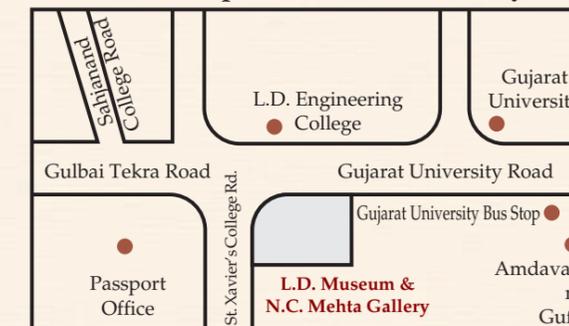
Time: 10.30 am. to 5.30 pm.

(Closed on Mondays & Public Holidays)

Summer: 8 am. to 1 pm. (May 1st to June 15th)



Route Map to N.C. Mehta Gallery

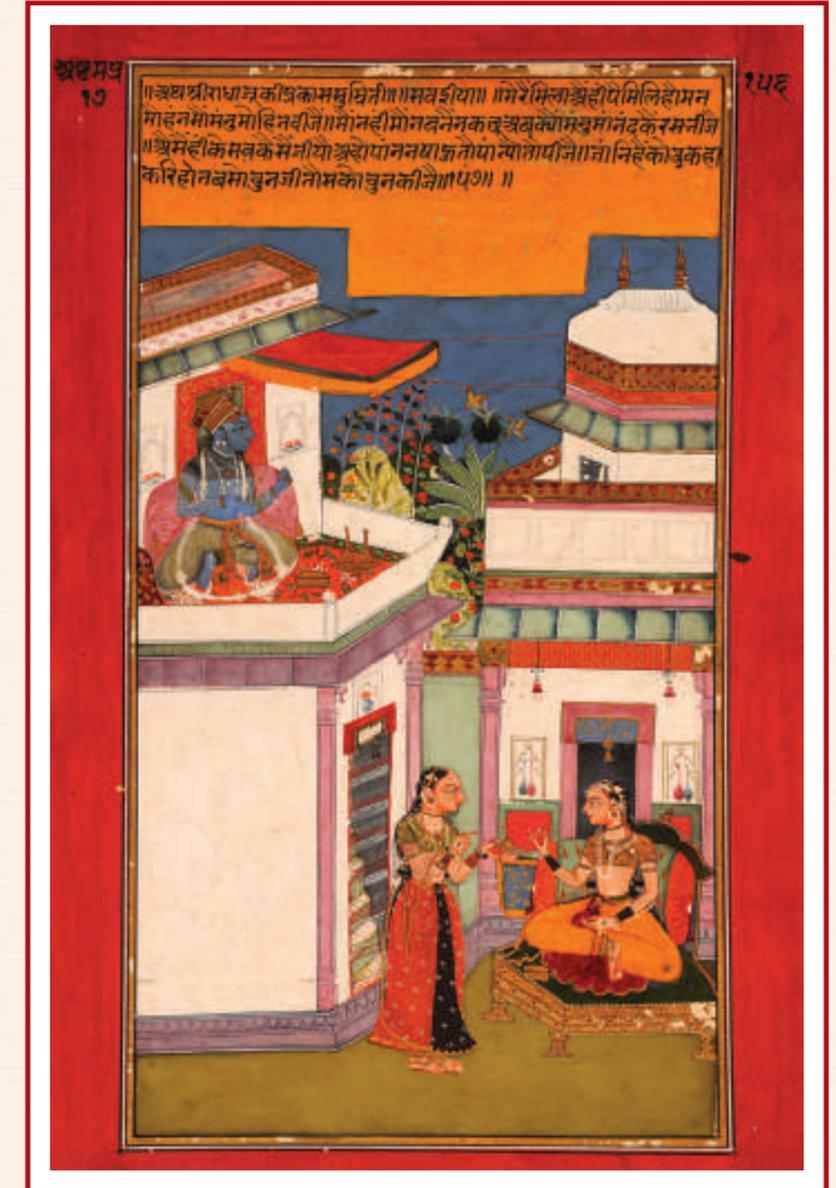


N.C. Mehta Gallery

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Email ID: ncm.gallery@ymail.com; ldmuseum@ymail.com



The Gujarat Museum Society N. C. Mehta Gallery



Nayika Longing for Meeting with Nayaka, Illustration from Rasikapriya of Keshavadas, Bundi, Rajasthani; c. 1690 A.D.

The Gujarat Museum Society N. C. Mehta Gallery

The Gujarat Museum Society was formed as Public Charitable Trust way back in 1960 to aesthetically exhibit the renowned N.C. Mehta Collection of miniature paintings. For this purpose the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation was kind enough to allot a portion of the first floor of the famous Sanskar Kendra building at Paldi, designed by Le Corbusier. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, inaugurated the exhibition in the year 1963. The late Nanalal C. Mehta (1894 - 1958) was one of the pioneers in the field of Indian Miniature Paintings. A member of Indian Civil Service, Nanalal had the eye of an aesthete, the perception of antiquarian and a sound background of



Mahavira's Enlightenment, an Illustrated Folio from Kalpasutra, dated V.S.1605 = 1548 A.D. Patan, Gujarat.

Sanskrit and Hindi literature. He published his researches through several books and articles, and brought to light several new documents of Indian and Gujarati paintings like the *Vasanta Vilasa* scroll, Early *Gita-Govinda*, folios of *Chaurapanchashika* series, of which the latter is the pride possession of N.C. Mehta Collection. After his demise in May 1958, his collection was generously donated to the Gujarat Museum Society, Ahmedabad, by his wife, late Smt. Shanta Mehta. The society's main objective is to inculcate art appreciation in the society and to promote study and research in art with a view to preserve our glorious national heritage.



Bilhana and Champavati, Folio from the Chaurapanchashika, Early 16th Century A.D. Probably painted in Gujarat.

The exhibition was housed at the Sanskar Kendra till 1991. However, some of the paintings started showing signs of strain, perhaps due to the surrounding environment. The Board of Trustees, therefore, decided to shift the collection to an area away from the Industrial zone. Fortunately the Governing Board of Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology came forward to put up a suitable building for exhibiting this collection in their premises situated adjacent to the

Gujarat University. A new wing has been designed by Padmashri Dr. Balkrishna V. Doshi, a renowned architect, integrated with the building of the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum. He has endeavoured to meet all the requirements to house and display the precious collection aesthetically. The new building was inaugurated by the eminent art historian, late Shri Karl Khandalavala, in October 1993. Due consideration has been given to security of objects and lighting. The intensity of light is scientifically measured to avoid its ill effects and display is reoriented to suit the new premises. Recently the galleries have been redesigned once again, which were formally opened to



Early Gita Govinda, Gujarat, Early 16th Century A.D.

public by the venerated scholar, Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan in August 2009.

Indian miniature paintings include illustrations of sacred or secular books, poetic compositions, epics, Ragamala paintings, darbar scenes, portraits, religious and social festivals. They were exchanged on special occasions as presentation items between kings and courtiers, and also used to embellish the walls of royal palaces, art galleries and bed chambers. They are called 'Miniature Paintings' because of their small size, painted on handmade paper with indigenous mineral colours.

Paintings in the Gallery have been arranged according to the evolution of schools, styles and periods. In the beginning we see early examples of miniature paintings of the Jaina and Sultanate Schools. The folios of the Jaina *Kalpasutra* and *Balagopala Stuti* represent painting in Gujarat during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Sultanate style is exhibited through the folios of the *Sikander Namah*. Further are exhibited the *piece de resistance* of the N.C. Mehta Gallery, the *Chaurapanchashika* series, i.e. the fifty love lyrics of a thief, composed by the Kashmiri poet Bilhana in the 11th century. The story goes that Bilhana, the poet, falls in love with Champavati. The fact comes to



Krishna lifting Mountain Govardhana, Illustration from Gita Govinda, Basohli Kalam, Pahari; c.1730 A.D.

the knowledge of Champavati's father, the king, who orders the poet to be sent to the gallows. On the last day, in order to fulfill his final wish, the king allows Bilhana to recite his fifty verses. So pleased was the king with the poetic compositions that he gives his daughter in marriage to Bilhana.

Among other popular themes of Indian miniature paintings are the love poems of the *Gita Govinda* by poet Jayadeva, the *Rasikapriya* of Keshavadas, the *Satsai* of Biharilal, the *Barabamasa* depictions of seasons and the *Ragamala* musical modes in colours. Paintings based on epics like *Bhagavata Purana* and *Ramayana* are also represented in