



Krishna, Narada and Arjuna

An illustration from the Harivamsa

The riverbank, resplendent

Crowns, turbans, and folded garments



Crowns and turbans lie in luminous heaps, their rounded folds echoing the rise and fall of the green bank.



Coral, lavender, and saffron unfold in a richly patterned company of sleeves, borders, and soft curves.

A world in conversation

The delicacy of a face, the eloquence of a hand



Turning profiles and answering gestures give the bathing company its gentle, animated rhythm.

Krishna, Arjuna, and Narada

Against the pale water, an answering hand and a listening face give the exchange its own intimate scale.



Krishna, Narada and Arjuna

An illustration from the Harivamsa

Attributed to Purkhu (active circa 1780–1820)

Kangra, Punjab Hills, India, circa 1800–1820 (proposed dating)

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 13 3/4 × 17 1/2 in. (35 × 44.5 cm) | Folio: 15 1/4 × 19 in. (38.8 × 48.2 cm)

Across the luminous breadth of the Yamuna, a world gathers in water. Bathers turn toward one another in a graceful succession of profiles and answering hands; on the bank, crowns, turbans, and garments rise in sumptuous heaps of coral, saffron, and lavender. At the lower right, the company gives way to a more spacious exchange: Krishna and Arjuna converse with Narada, whose long-necked stringed instrument marks the sage's presence. The river becomes a field of attention, joining the pleasures of an assembly to the intimacy of listening.

Sotheby's identifies the episode as a water gathering from the Harivamsa, the supplement to the Mahabharata concerned with Krishna's lineage and exploits.¹ The dense company at the left and the three interlocutors at the right establish distinct rhythms within a continuous landscape. Between them, pale water opens a measured interval; swimmers and tiny fish carry the eye across its surface. The painter makes a populous sacred narrative legible through the delicacy of individual encounters.

The attribution to Purkhu places the folio within the ambitious narrative practice of the Kangra atelier. The National Museum of Asian Art describes Purkhu as the head of a large workshop whose oversize illustrated cycles included the Harivamsa.² Its expansive scale and finely differentiated groups offer a compelling setting for that connoisseurial discussion.

Within Worlds Within, this folio in Painted Worlds gives particular eloquence to the catalogue's movement between intimacy and spectacle. An entire realm of sacred sociability unfolds through small exchanges: a listening face, an answering hand, the soft convergence of figures in water. The page holds the abundance of a world while preserving the tenderness of a single moment.

PROVENANCE

Acquired from the Royal Library of Mandi in 1969, as recorded by Sotheby's; Sotheby's, New York, 19 September 2008, lot 206. This published account does not establish a complete chain of ownership.

SELECTED REFERENCES

1. Sotheby's, *Indian & Southeast Asian Works of Art*, New York, 19 September 2008, N08499, lot 206.
2. National Museum of Asian Art, *Jarasandha's army advances toward Krishna and Balarama*, S2018.1.17, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1800–1815 (comparison).