

# AMIR MOHTASHEMI



## Painting from a Ragamala Series

Mankot, India, circa 1720-30

19.5cm high, 19cm wide

Opaque watercolour on paper

Provenance: Private European Collection

Stock no.: A4522

A groom walking, mid-stride, looks back as he leads a prince on horseback. He carries an axe high in one hand and a horsewhip in the other. Mounted on a white horse the prince is finely dressed in a striped jama (coat), fastened around the waist with a patka (waistband), and a turban adorned with a head-plume and sarpech (jewelled ornament). A katar dagger is tucked under his patka, and a tulwar style of sword hangs from the prince's waist.

According to the inscription in the upper right corner, this scene likely illustrates the raga known as 'Goda Putra'. A raga (melody) is a style of Indian music, consisting of five, six or seven notes distributed over the octave scale in a particular arrangement. The paintings are illustrations of poems, which visually convey the mood of Raga music and each raga is usually personified by a nayaka and nayika (hero and heroine), together with specific Hindu deities attached with the raga (Pratapaditya, p. 7).

The bold yet simple design of this scene follows the style of Mankot painting, the square format in particular for Mankot Ragamala paintings from the late 17th to early 18th century. Furthermore, the figures are typically rendered with slightly pointed heads, animated faces, and a small portion of hair protruding from underneath their turbans (Tandan, p. 97). For an example of a Mankot Ragamala painting also in square format, see the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Number IM.66-1930. For an example of a slightly earlier version of the same scene from Rajasthan, see Tandan, fig. 44, where the prince has been tentatively identified as Rao Bhao Singh of Bundi.

Literature:

Pratapaditya, P. Ragamala Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, The Meriden Gravure Co., 1969.

Tandan, R. K. Indian Miniature Painting: 16th through 19th centuries, Natesan Publisher, India, 1982.