

Chetan Das (active mid-18th century)

Sri Raga

India (Amer, Rajasthan), dated 1746

Watercolor on paper

Gift of the Christensen Fund, 2001

(10747.1)

He is dressed in red. He is love incarnate and wears a necklace of crystal beads. He speaks nectar-like words, rooted in beauty. His hand is resplendent with a lotus blossom.

-Inscription on an 18th-century Amer *ragamala* painting
(translated by Rai Krishnadasa, quoted in Klaus Ebeling,
Ragamala Paintings)

The governing male *raga* of the sixth *raga* family, Sri means "lord." Appropriately, the *raga* is portrayed as a sumptuously dressed noble with his consort in a palatial setting, listening to an elder playing the *vina*. This last figure sometimes is identified as the legendary Narada, a key sage in the worship of Vishnu (indeed, sometimes Sri is depicted as Krishna, one of Vishnu's incarnations). The authorship of the *Pancharatra*, an important ritual text with instructions for Vaishnavite priests, is attributed to Narada, as are many prayer formulas, and even the invention of the *vina*. In some paintings Narada's attendant is depicted as a horse-headed *kinnara* (a divine being closely associated with music), but here the artist provides him with a more restrained, entirely human form.

Chetan Das (active mid-18th century)

Pancham Ragini of the Sri Raga

India (Amer, Rajasthan), dated 1746

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(10748.1)

Entertainment of the unhappy is the abundance of happiness for the happy. He enslaves the heart and ear, herald of the god of love. Most skillful is the galant, beloved of lonely women; all hail, sound of the world, discoverer of Pancham.

-Inscription on a 17th-century Mughal *Ragamala* painting
(quoted in Klaus Ebeling, *Ragamala Paintings*)

Pancham is the first *ragini* wife in the sixth *raga* family governed by Sri. The right side of the painting is dominated by a palace, in which a lord and his consort embrace, gazing enraptured in each other's eyes. Outside the palace on the left, a musician and his attendant are rewarded by a female servant for their performance, which has effectively evoked a passionate response from their listeners.

Chetan Das (active mid-18th century)

Kamod Ragini of the Sri Raga

India (Amer, Rajasthan), dated 1746

Watercolor on paper

Gift of the Christensen Fund, 2001

(10749.1)

The fine-haired lady wears a yellow robe, she weeps in distress at the voice of the cuckoo in the woods; looking about in mighty terror, Kamod recalls her beloved.

-The Mirror of Music, Damodara Misra, c.1625 (translated by O. C. Gangoly, quoted in Klaus Ebeling, Ragamala Paintings)

Kamod is the second *ragini* wife in the sixth *raga* family governed by Sri. The iconography of this *ragini* varies widely in different traditions, but in general she is associated with the *rasa* of intense religious devotion. Here, a court woman is shown worshipping a *lingam* phallus (usually associated with Shiva) adorned with flower petals, with the implements of her offering spread out before her. A female attendant looks back towards the bedchamber on the right, implying that her lady is praying to be reunited with her lover; an air of hope comes from the fact that while the bedchamber is empty, it is lighted, perhaps suggesting his impending arrival.

Chetan Das (active mid-18th century)

Setmalar Ragini of the Sri Raga

India (Amer, Rajasthan), dated 1746

Watercolor on paper

Gift of the Christensen Fund, 2001

(10750.1)

She is extremely slim and fair-complexioned. She is youthful and severely anguished by separation from her lover. She is like the cuckoo in her voice and holds a vina in her hand. She puts on unlaundered garments, cries and then consoles her heart with thoughts of her lover.

-Inscription on an 18th-century Amer *ragamala* painting
(translated by Rai Krishnadasa, quoted in Klaus Ebeling, *Ragamala Paintings*)

Setmalar is the third *ragini* wife in the sixth *raga* family governed by Sri. Like Devgandhar in the third family and Bangal in the fifth family, the *rasa* or "flavor" of this *ragini* is one of asceticism, and consequently the composition is dominated by male rather than female figures. In the upper register an emaciated, yet handsome, ascetic sits leaning against a tree as he gazes into the distance, attended by a scantily clad youth standing behind him. In the lower register, another youth kneels to honor a blue-skinned ascetic wearing a patchwork cloak accompanied by yet another ascetic holding a gourd and standing in a yogic meditative posture with his left leg raised.

Chetan Das (active mid-18th century)

Asavari Ragini of the Sri Raga

India (Amer, Rajasthan), dated 1746

Watercolor on paper

Gift of the Christensen Fund, 2001

(10751.1)

She wears a white sari. Bedecked, she is resplendent in her every limb. Her complexion is dark and she has her body besmeared with white sandal paste. She is formidable and has serpents coiled around her. At the summit, which abounds in cool water, she sits resplendent under a tree.

-Inscription on an 18th-century Amer *ragamala* painting
(translated by Rai Krishnadasa, quoted in Klaus
Ebeling, *Ragamala Paintings*)

Asavari is the fourth *ragini* wife in the sixth *raga* family governed by Sri. In both the poetic and painterly *ragamala* traditions, she is closely associated with snake charming, and some scholars have suggested that the name of this *ragini* might be linked to a tribe that was known for this practice. Often Asavari herself is shown as an ascetic in the wilderness surrounded by snakes, but this presented some problems for traditional Indian sensibilities that normally identified asceticism with men, and here she rather is shown as a finely dressed noblewoman in the wilderness attending to a male ascetic who plays a pipe to attract the numerous snakes that fill the ground and coil on all the trees.

Chetan Das (active mid-18th century)

Kedar Ragini of the Sri Raga

India (Amer, Rajasthan), dated 1746

Watercolor on paper

Gift of the Christensen Fund, 2001

(10752.1)

The raga Kedar is said to be an ascetic, whose mind is drowned in meditation on Shiva, observing the Yogapitha posture, wearing a snake as upper garment, crowned by the white moon, and having plaited his hair.

*-The Mirror of Music, Damodara Misra, c.1625
(translated by A. A. Bake, quoted in Klaus Ebeling,
Ragamala Paintings)*

Kedar is the fifth *ragini* wife in the sixth *raga* family governed by Sri, and usually the last painting in a *ragamala* set. Here once again we return to the *rasa* or "flavor" of asceticism, in this case with the *ragini* shown as a (male) ascetic whose renowned dedication has attracted a noble following, indicated by the regal visitor offering him a lotus bud on the right, accompanied by two courtiers, with a groom in the lower register watching over his horse. In turn, the ascetic, whose incongruously sumptuous dress indicates the high regard in which he is held, is attended by a scantily clad youth standing in a meditative yoga posture, with his right leg raised.