

Selection from the Bārahmāsā or “12 month” poetry sequence in the *Kavipriyā* of Keshavas, 1601

In these poems a clever woman protests that her husband/lover is setting out on a journey. For each month of the year she finds excuses why he shouldn't leave. I include a few sample paintings since these poems were often illustrated.

अथ आषाढ़-वर्णन-(छप्पय)

पवन चक्र परचंड चलत चहुँ ओर चपल गति ।
भवन भामिनिहि तजत भ्रमति मानहु तिनकी मति ।
संन्यासी इहि मास होत इक आसनबासी ।
पुरुषन की को कहै भए पंछियौ निवासी ।
इहि समय सेज सोवन लियो श्रीहि साथ श्रीनाथ हू ।
कहि 'केसवदास' आषाढ़ चल मै न सुन्यौ श्रुतिगाथ हू ॥२७॥

Āṣāṛh

Pavana cakra paracaṇḍa calata cahuṃ ora capala gati
Bhavana bhāminihi tajata bhramati mānahu tinakī mati
Sanyāsī ihi māsa hota ika āsanabāsī
Puruṣana kī ko kahai bhae pañchiyau nivāsī
Ihi samaya seja sovana liyo śrīhi sātha śrīnātha hū
Kahi 'kesavadāsa' āṣāṛha cala maim na sunyaum śrutigātha hū

The high winds gust fiercely in all directions, with the speed of lightning

How can you leave your beloved at home?

Have you lost your mind?

Ascetics adopt a single posture for the whole month.

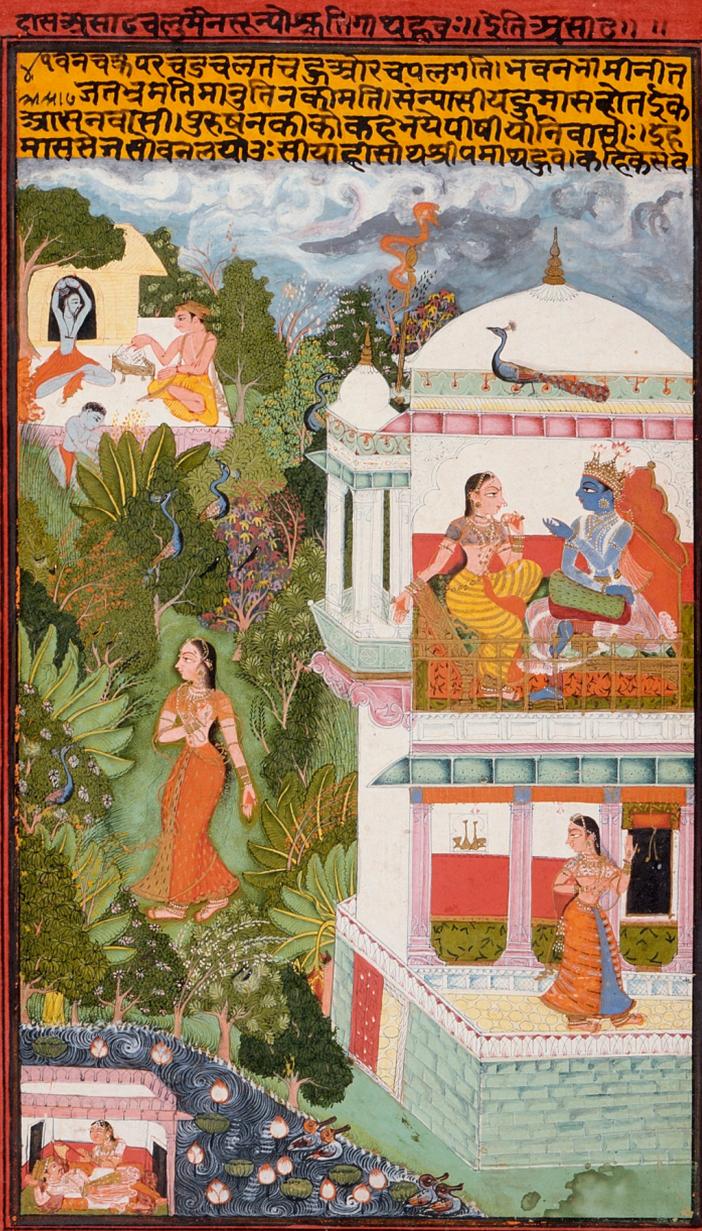
Even birds stay put.

This is no time for a man to leave home!

Shrinath (Vishnu) too takes to his bed

with Shri (Lakshmi) right by his side.

It's unheard of (not found in scripture) for a person to set out in the month of Asarh.



The Month of Ashadha

India, Rajasthan, Kota, circa 1700-1725

Drawings; watercolors

Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink
on paper

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
(M.71.1.26)

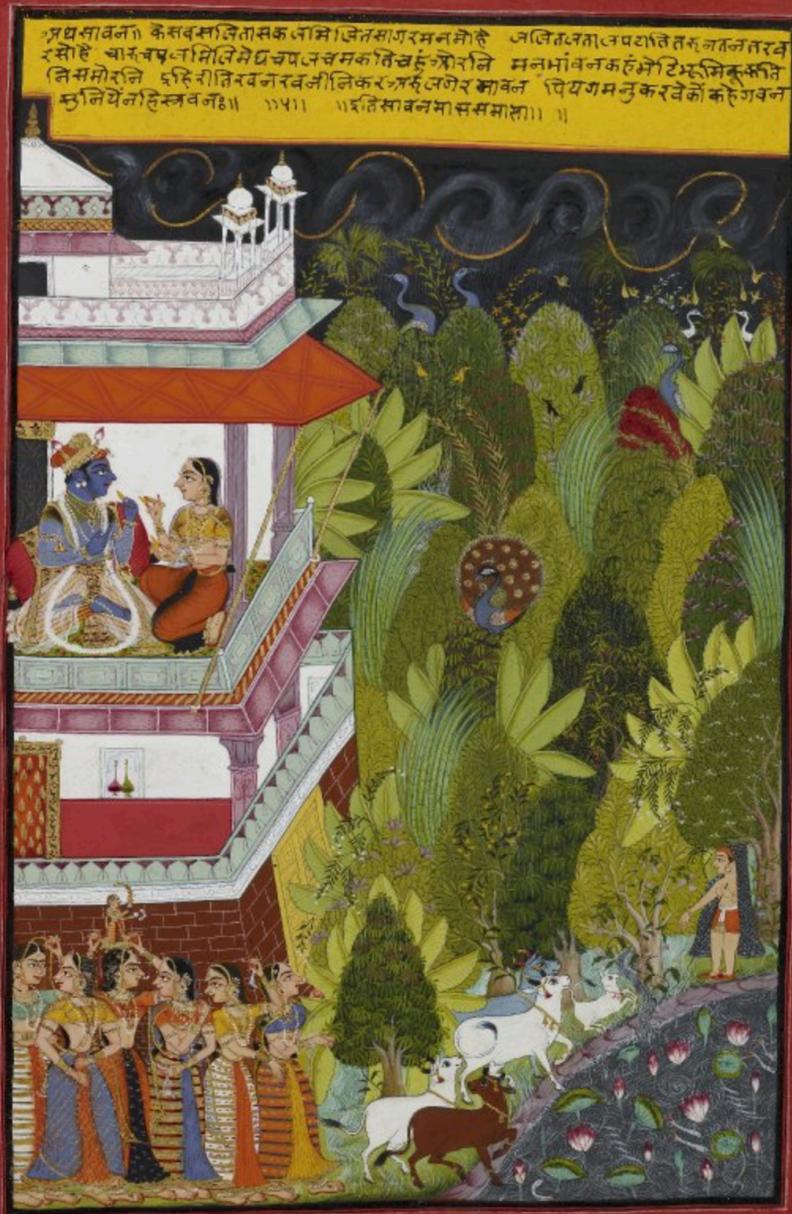
अथ श्रावण-वर्णन--(छप्पय)

'केसव' सरिता सकल मिलित सागर मन मोहै ।
ललित लता लपटात तरुन तन तरबर सोहै ।
रुचि चपला मिलि मेघ चपल चमकत घहुँ ओरन ।
मनभावन कहँ भँटि भूमि कूजत मिस मोरन ।
इहि रीति रमन रमनी सकल लागे रमन रमावन ।
प्रिय गमन करन की को कहै गमन सुनिय नहिँ सावन ॥२८॥

Śrāvaṇ (Sāvan)

'Kesava' saritā sakala milita sāgara mana mohaiṃ
Lalita latā lapaṭāta taruna tana tarabara sohaiṃ
Ruci capalā mili megha capala camakata cahuṃ orana
Manabhāvana kahaṃ bheṃṭi bhūmi kūjata misa (nisa?) morana
Ihi rīti ramana ramanī sakala lāge ramana ramāvana
Priya gamana karata kī ko kahai gamana suniya nahaiṃ sāvana

The swollen rivers merge into the sea, delighting him.
The beautiful vines are locked in splendid embrace with
the youthful trees
The dazzle of lightning mingles with the clouds as far as
the eye can see.
The cry of the peacock is actually the earth making love
with the rain.
And so all couples delight and delight one another.
What's this talk of leaving?
It's simply unheard of to leave in Savan.



Month of Sravana
Bundi
British Museum
1675-1700

अथ भाद्रपद-वर्णन-(छप्पय)

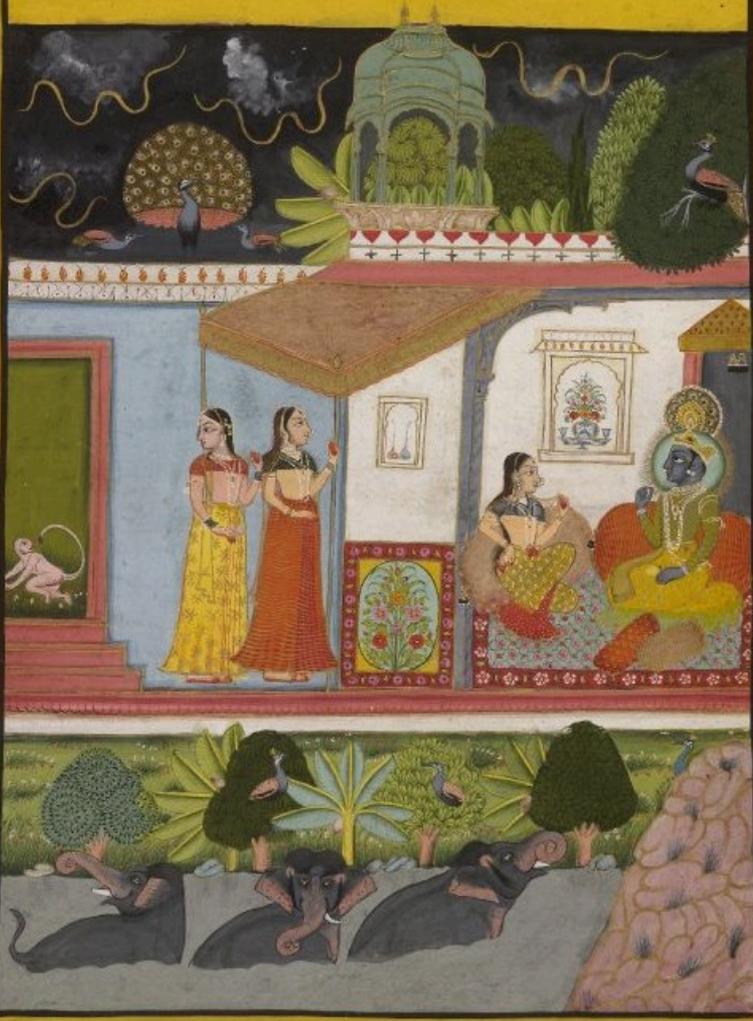
घोरत घन चहुँ ओर घोष निर्घोषनि मंडहि ।
धाराधर धरि धरनि मुसलधारनि जल छंडहि ।
झिल्लीगन-भंकार ,पवन झुकि झुकि झकझोरत ।
बाघ सिंघ गुंजरत पुंज-कुंजर तरु तोरत ।
निसिदिन बिसेष निरसेष मिटि जात, सु ओली ओड़ियै ।
निज देस पियूष, बिदेस बिष भादौ भवन न छोड़ियै ॥२६॥

Bhādrapad (Bhādom)

Ghorata ghana cahuṃ ora ghoṣa nirghoṣani maṇḍahi
Dhārādharma dhari dharani musaladhārani jala chaṇḍahi
Jhillīgana-jhaṅkāra pavana jhuki jhuki jhakajhorata
Bāgha siṃgha guñjarata puñja-kuñjara taru torata
Nisidina biseṣa niraseṣa miṭi jāta su olī oṛiyai
Nija desa piyūṣa, bidesa biṣa bhādauṃ bhavana na choṛiyai

Thunder crashes and booms from every direction, overwhelming village huts.
Clouds take hold of the earth and unleash torrential rain.
The air fills with the din of crickets, the wind gusts and roars.
Lions and tigers roar, herds of elephants stampede through the forest, uprooting trees.
The difference between day and night vanishes completely.
You have to cover yourself against the rain.
In Bhadon, staying home with your beloved is nectar-- being abroad is poison.
It's not a time to leave home.

अथ भाद्रपद मासे सिषा ॥ धारत घनचिद्रवोरघोषनिघोषनिमंडहि ॥ धारधरधा
रिधरसिंघयेज रति पुंज कुंजरतुनोरहि ॥ निसिदिनवेसेषनि ॥ शेषमितिजात
सुनोलीवोडिये ॥ देसपियुषविदेराविष नादौ नवनमछांफिये ॥२॥



Month of Bhadon
Jaipur
British Museum
c. 1800

घोरतघ्नचरुघोरघोरनिघोरनिमंडहि॥घाराघरधरघरनिमुस
लघारनिजलुछंडहि॥अिल्लीगनअंकारपवनशुकिशुकिअकअक
अरत॥सिंघवाघगुंजरतऊंजुजरतउंनोरत॥निसिदिनविसेष
निःसषमतिकतसुगोडावाडिरे॥देसपयूषविदेसविषुसुजादोच
वनुनछोडिए॥६॥



Month of Bhadon

India, Madhya Pradesh, Malwa, circa 1640-1650

Drawings; watercolors

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper

LACMA (M.71.1.15)