

*Doordarshan's*  
*Poetry of the Hills*  
By Benoy K Behl

(On the miniature paintings of Kangra)



***Radha and Krishna, Kangra Miniature painting.***

The Himalayas have been a great crucible of India's ancient culture. Here, protected by the tallest mountains in the world, deep philosophic thoughts and artistic ideas have come down through the centuries.

From the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards in India, there was a great revival of Vaishnavism. With it came the Bhakti cult which was the doctrine of a deep and personal love of the Divine: where the soul of man was seen to be yearning always for the Lord who created him, for the tenderness and ecstasy of being united with Him. The poet

saints of the Bhakti movement wrote beautiful verses about the legendary lives and the love of Krishna and Radha, of Rama and Sita and of Shiva and Parvati. The love of the divine figures for each other became the ideal of the people. Images of their divine love were used by poets and painters to portray their own love for the Creator.

Kangra is a small hill state tucked away in the bosom of the green hills of Himachal Pradesh far from the clamour of the plains. Here in Kangra, we see the development of one of the finest expressions in art. A great confluence took place: the burnished delicacy of the Mughal idiom met the deep spirituality of the land.

With the refinement and technical skills in their hands, the spirit of the warm and simple hill painters took wings. They created a large body of paintings which are among the finest made by man. These paintings bring



***Kangra Miniature, Pahari School***



***Kangra Miniature, Pahari School***

to us the gentlest and most tender thoughts. They enshrine a deep love for all of creation, in a manner which is intensely personal and deeply devoted.

The world of Kangra paintings is one of tenderness and love. It is the spirit of Bhakti, the ecstatic joy of adoration, the supreme joy of the giving of oneself in the love of God which pervades the entire world of these paintings. After many centuries the paintings of Kangra take us back to the sense of the tender and compassionate world created by the paintings of Ajanta.

The Bhagwat Purana consists of 18,000 verses which were composed in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in praise of Lord Vishnu and his manifestation upon this earth in the form of Lord Krishna. These verses describe the life, the adventures and the miraculous deeds of Krishna from the time of his birth.

The scenes of Krishna's childhood exploits are particularly endearing and evoke the tender sentiments of the worshippers. We have beautiful paintings on the exquisite theme of Baby Krishna: the Lord as a mischievous child, with his playful antics, giving no end of trouble to his mother.

The humanity of these themes of the interaction between a mother and a naughty and irrepressible child touch the heart immediately. These simple paintings in their rustic settings are among the most endearing.

The images of the Lord as a toddler and his naughty pranks, the little boy stealing butter with his friends, getting caught, being scolded by his mother and pretending to be sorry. These images win the heart completely.



***Kangra Miniature, Pahari School***



### ***Kangra Miniature, Pahari School***

her feet as she looks on shyly. In another painting, Radha and Krishna, in their love of each other, exchange their clothes.

The film 'Poetry of the Hills' is produced by Benoy K Behl for DOORDARSHAN. It is part of his series of 26 films on THE PAINTINGS OF INDIA.

### **About the film-maker**

The author Benoy K Behl is a film-maker, art-historian and photographer who is known for his tireless and prolific output of work over the past 32 years. He has taken over 35,000 photographs of Asian monuments and art heritage, made a hundred documentaries on art history, his exhibitions have been warmly received in 28 countries around the world and he holds the Limca Book Record for having travelled to all corners of India. The vastness of Behl's documentation presents a wide and new perspective in understanding the art of India and Asia.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the poet Jaydeva wrote the Gita Govinda which brings to us the most lyrical images of the love of Radha and Krishna. The exquisite verses bring to life the emotions of the divine lovers in scenes of their separation, longing and joyous reunion. The poetic themes of love are painted with great tenderness by the Kangra artist.

These are images of intense love. The tenderness in these paintings transcends all barriers and lifts us to another plane where there is complete caring and harmony. The Lord gently and lovingly places an anklet on Radha's foot...he paints