



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Between the Shrine and the Salon

Dutch Bengal Painting and the Birth of the Early Bengal Oil

A history of translation, devotion and the first Indian experiments on canvas



An Unusual Example of a Landscape in the Dutch Bengal Style. 'Eye of the Beholder' collection.

Dr. Anirban Sadhu

Eye of the Beholder | 2026

Long before European oil painting arrived in Bengal, India possessed one of the world's most sophisticated cultures of pictorial narration. Court ateliers, temple workshops and hereditary families of painters had mastered line, colour, rhythm and compressed storytelling on palm leaf, cloth, paper and prepared wasli. The arrival of oil and canvas did not awaken a dormant visual culture. It introduced a new material language into an already articulate one. What followed was not simply imitation, but translation: Indian painters learned to make European matter carry Indian memory.

A name that conceals as much as it reveals

The term "Dutch Bengal painting" has become familiar in auction catalogues and among collectors, but it is neither a consistently defined school nor a guarantee of Dutch authorship. At its most useful, it points towards an early history of oil painting around the European settlements on the Hooghly River, especially the Dutch establishment at Chinsurah. At its least useful, it is a loose commercial label applied to almost any anonymous Bengali mythological oil made between the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The wider term "Early Bengal oils" is therefore preferable. It can accommodate paintings from Chinsurah and French Chandernagore, but also works made in Calcutta neighbourhoods such as Chitpur and Garanahata and, eventually, paintings shaped by art schools, photographic studios, imported prints and named academic artists.

Even "Early Bengal" requires care. It does not mean that Bengal had no earlier painting. Nor does it refer to the celebrated Bengal School associated after 1900 with Abanindranath Tagore, E. B. Havell, Nandalal Bose and a conscious rejection of Western academic naturalism. Early Bengal oils belong to the prehistory of that better-known movement: a heterogeneous body of devotional, mythological, portrait and occasional secular painting in which indigenous conventions encountered oil paint, stretched cloth, chiaroscuro, landscape depth and European illusionism. The artists are usually anonymous. Their anonymity is not evidence of insignificance. It reflects workshop practice, devotional use and a historical system in which the image, patron and sacred subject often mattered more than the public personality of the painter.

TERMINOLOGY Use "Dutch Bengal" for the historical Chinsurah association or where evidence supports it; use "Early Bengal oil" for the broader anonymous tradition. A signed work by a European artist such as Sunkel belongs to the surrounding history, but is not automatically an Early Bengal devotional oil.

Before oil: an already mature pictorial civilisation

Indian painting before colonial rule cannot be reduced to the word "miniature," although miniature painting was one of its greatest achievements. Mughal, Rajput, Pahari, Deccani, Jain, Buddhist, Persianate and regional workshops produced images of extraordinary technical refinement. Sheets of paper were layered and burnished into wasli; mineral and organic pigments were ground and bound; gold and silver were applied with minute control. Perspective was not absent so much as differently conceived. A palace could be opened out to show several rooms at once; time could unfold across one surface; hierarchy could determine scale; and landscape could be organised as a field of emotional and narrative signs rather than as a single optical cone.

Bengal had its own interlocking traditions: manuscript illustration, pata painting, temple and domestic imagery, painted scrolls, clay modelling and the visual culture of Vaishnava and Shakta worship. By the eighteenth century, artists displaced from declining courts such as Murshidabad also moved towards new centres of patronage. Company painting emerged when Indian painters adapted their skills to the documentary and aesthetic demands of European patrons, rendering plants, animals, occupations, buildings and social types on paper. The crucial point is that adaptation preceded oil. Indian artists had already demonstrated a remarkable ability to absorb foreign patronage without surrendering the internal intelligence of their craft.

Europe on the Hooghly: the older Dutch layer

The European presence in Bengal was plural before it became overwhelmingly British. Portuguese, Dutch, French, Danish, Armenian and British communities occupied a chain of commercial settlements along the Hooghly. The Dutch East India Company established itself at Hooghly in the 1630s and shifted its main station to Chinsurah in 1656. A monumental oil now in the Rijksmuseum, Hendrik van Schuylenburgh's *The Dutch Factory in Hooghly-Chinsurah* of 1665, demonstrates that oil painting was physically present in the region long before the nineteenth century. More than three metres wide, the canvas turns the trading post into a panoramic theatre of ships, labour, diplomatic encounter and colonial commerce. It was made for Dutch purposes and through a Dutch pictorial language; it was not an indigenous Early Bengal oil. Yet it establishes the material and visual environment within which local artisans could encounter European painted surfaces, heraldry, topographical views and commemorative objects.

Objects made locally for the Dutch church at Chinsurah strengthen this point. Painted funerary hatchments and armorial panels, some preserved in the Rijksmuseum, show anonymous Bengali makers working with oil paint on tropical wood during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such evidence does not prove a direct, continuous lineage from VOC workshops to every later mythological canvas. Transmission is rarely so neat. It does, however, make the conventional story - that oil suddenly appeared with British artists in the nineteenth century - untenable. Oil painting in Bengal had a longer, dispersed and materially complicated prehistory.

The British artist-travellers and the prestige of the painted view

The better documented wave of European artist-travellers began in the later eighteenth century. Tilly Kettle reached Calcutta in 1769 and built a career painting officials, nawabs and Indian elites. William Hodges travelled in India from 1780 to 1783, turning ruins, rivers and atmospheric distances into a picturesque imperial landscape. Johann Zoffany arrived in 1783 and produced theatrical portraits and conversation pieces. Thomas and William Daniell travelled from 1786, and their aquatint series *Oriental Scenery* gave European and Indian audiences a durable repertoire of monuments, vegetation, skies and recession. Thomas Hickey, George Chinnery, Charles D'Oyly, James Baillie Fraser and others extended the culture of portraiture and topography. The Flemish artist François Balthazar Solvyns, resident in Calcutta in the 1790s, catalogued occupations, dress, boats, festivals and social types through hundreds of etchings.

These artists were not all alike, and they did not constitute a single teaching programme. Nevertheless, their work enlarged the prestige of oil portraiture, illusionistic architecture, recession and atmospheric landscape. Indian rulers and the new commercial elite commissioned European-style portraits. Prints circulated far beyond the original paintings. Photography later supplied new poses, faces and ideas of likeness. Indian painters encountered European naturalism not only face to face but through engravings, lithographs, illustrated books, studio props and copied compositions. The transfer was consequently uneven: one workshop might master jewellery and faces but improvise perspective; another might copy a European landscape while retaining the frontal logic of an icon.

Continental and American visitors further complicate a British-only narrative. German, Italian, Danish and other painters worked in India, sometimes for extended periods. In the later nineteenth century, American artists such as Edwin Lord Weeks transformed Indian streets, courts and architecture into virtuoso Orientalist spectacles. Weeks belongs to a later moment than the formative phase of the Early Bengal oil, but his career reveals how India had become part of an international circuit of academic painting. Horace van Ruith, a British artist of German-Dutch parentage, and the Danish painter H. V. Pedersen likewise remind us that colonial visual culture was more cosmopolitan than imperial labels suggest.

Franz Eduard Sunkel and the problem of beginnings

Within this history Franz Eduard Sunkel - whose name has also been inconsistently transcribed in later references - is tantalising. He was a German itinerant artist active in nineteenth-century Bengal and associated with elite patronage and portraiture. Partha Mitter's research places Sunkel within the working world of early Bengali oil painters. Gangadhar Dey, one of the difficult-to-trace pioneers before the better documented art-school generation, studied under the English painter Thomas Roods and also worked with the German Sunkel and the Italian Geonelli. This is more precise than the sweeping assertion that Sunkel single-handedly "introduced oil painting" to eastern India. Oil was present earlier, and artistic transmission had many agents. Sunkel's importance lies instead in providing a documented bridge: an identifiable continental painter participating directly in the formation of Indian professional oil practice.

Sunkel also did not predate Tilly Kettle in India. Kettle's arrival in 1769 belongs nearly a century earlier than the dated Sunkel landscape in the Eye of the Beholder collection. The correction does not diminish Sunkel. It clarifies his real historical position. He belongs to the mid-nineteenth-century moment when intermittent exposure became sustained professional instruction, when Indian painters entered exhibitions, undertook portrait commissions and increasingly treated oil painting as a career rather than an exotic material encounter.

Bamapada Banerjee, also called Bamapada Mukherjee in some later accounts, represents a subsequent stage. Born in 1851, he became known for mythological oils, portraits and images that circulated through German-made oleographs. His training is more commonly linked to the visiting German artist Karl Becker, not directly to Sunkel. Bamapada's success shows how rapidly the field changed: the devotional oil could now be translated into a reproducible print, reaching a public far beyond the mansion or shrine that commissioned the original.

How an Early Bengal oil looks

No single checklist can authenticate an Early Bengal painting, but recurring features create a family resemblance. The support is commonly cloth canvas, sometimes later pasted onto another fabric or relined. Oil may be combined with gold leaf, gold pigment or bright detailing. Figures often occupy a shallow stage before dark woodland, misty mountains, palatial interiors or studio-like curtains. Bodies possess some volume, yet contours remain emphatic. Faces can have broad foreheads, large liquid eyes and softly modelled, full anatomies. Jewellery is not incidental: necklaces, crowns, anklets, earrings and patterned textiles turn the divine body into a site of both worship and social aspiration.

Perspective is frequently hybrid. A throne may recede while the surrounding figures remain hieratic; an architectural façade may be optically plausible in one passage and diagrammatic in another. Such inconsistencies were once dismissed as failed academicism. That judgement mistakes the objective. These painters did not necessarily seek to erase indigenous habits in favour of a single European viewpoint. They wanted enough volume, splendour and worldly presence to satisfy a new urban patron, while preserving the instant legibility and devotional authority of an icon. Their gods had to inhabit a recognisable world without becoming ordinary mortals.

Subject matter ranges across Krishna legends, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Shiva and Parvati, Kali, Durga, Chaitanya and other regional devotional themes. There are also portraits, alluring *sundaris* and rare secular or architectural subjects. Patronage came from Bengali *bhadralok* families, zamindars, merchants and Marwari or Gujarati communities established in Bengal. Costume may disclose the intended audience: Yashoda can appear in a *ghagra* and *choli* for a non-Bengali mercantile patron. Many religious oils were installed in domestic shrines. Soot, incense, humidity and repeated handling left dark varnish, leathery craquelure and local losses. Condition is therefore not peripheral to interpretation. The physical surface may bear evidence that the object was worshipped rather than merely displayed.

Three paintings, three positions on the spectrum

Rādhā and Krishna with the Aṣṭasakhīs



Anonymous Early Bengal artist, Rādhā and Krishna with the Aṣṭasakhīs, probably nineteenth century. Oil on canvas. Eye of the Beholder collection.

The first devotional painting in the Eye of the Beholder collection gathers Rādhā and the blue-skinned Krishna on a dark lotus-like pedestal, encircled by eight female companions. Their number identifies the assembly as the Aṣṭasakhīs, the eight principal intimates of Rādhā. Some kneel in reverence; others carry offerings, instruments or a fly-whisk. The arrangement is less a naturalistic incident than a mandala of intimacy. Krishna bends toward Rādhā, while the companions create an oval rhythm around the central pair. Devotion is expressed through proximity: the divine couple are not isolated in supernatural grandeur but embedded within a female community of music, service and shared emotion.

This painting stands near the indigenous end of the Early Bengal spectrum. Space is shallow and the figures are stacked rather than optically dispersed. Scale and placement carry more meaning than anatomy. Yet oil has altered the emotional weather of the scene. The near-black environment, smoky mountain forms and selective glints on jewellery create a nocturnal atmosphere unavailable to the flat brilliance of many works on paper. Halos and pearls puncture the darkness. The painter has not abandoned miniature logic; he has made oil perform it on a larger, more sensuous plane.

Even so, the picture's devotional structure remains compelling. It exemplifies why these works should not be judged solely by academic finish. Its power lies in ritual concentration, chromatic sparks and the transformation of Krishna bhakti into a domestic oil icon.

Śiva and His Family.



Anonymous Early Bengal artist, The Family of Śiva: Śiva, Pārvatī, Gaṇeśa and the child Kārttikeya, probably late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Oil on canvas. Eye of the Beholder collection.

The second collection painting occupies a later and more naturalistic position. Śiva stands tall and ash-white, bearing trident, serpent, matted hair and crescent moon. Pārvatī, richly dressed in red, touches Gaṇeśa's hand while inclining her head in a gesture that is at once regal, maternal and shy. The elephant-headed child, crowned and four-armed, forms the centre of the family chain. At the left, a human child clings exuberantly to Śiva. In this context he is best read as the young Kārttikeya, completing the divine household.

Here the gods have acquired mass. Feet press into the foreground, fabrics wrap around bodies, and landscape recedes through rocks, water, hills and atmospheric sky. The broad tree at right acts like a European landscape repoussoir, framing the scene and directing attention inward. Yet the painting remains iconically organised. The family forms an almost continuous frieze; attributes are clearly displayed; jewellery is rendered through brilliant dotted highlights; and differences of scale preserve hierarchy. The painter accepts Western modelling without allowing it to dissolve the clarity of sacred identification.

This domestication of divinity is one of the tradition's most attractive achievements. Śiva is not shown annihilating a demon or lost in cosmic meditation. He is a father gently containing an energetic child. Pārvatī is not only goddess but mother. Early Bengal oils repeatedly bring gods into the emotional register of the Bengali household. Their supernatural attributes remain, but their gestures are legible through family affection. This is neither secularisation nor mere sentimentality. It is bhakti expressed through domestic recognition.

Franz Eduard Sunkel, *A Garden House in Bengal*, 1865



Franz Eduard Sunkel, *A Garden House in Bengal*, 1865. Oil on canvas. Signed and dated lower right. Eye of the Beholder collection. The identity of the house remains to be established.

The third collection work differs fundamentally from the anonymous devotional oils, yet illuminates the environment from which they emerged. Sunkel presents a low, European neoclassical garden house embedded in the tropical abundance of Bengal. Its long colonnaded front, roof balustrade, green shutters and small raised pavilion give the building an unmistakably colonial architectural vocabulary. Yet the house does not dominate the landscape. Palms rise above it; flowering shrubs press towards the façade; and the ordered geometry of steps, terrace and balustrade is gradually absorbed by vegetation.

A broad masonry stair descends from the garden to the water in the foreground, converting the house into an estate organised around access, display and climate. Several finely scaled figures gather on and near the steps. Their white clothing and upright poses animate the architecture without turning the view into a formal portrait. The water doubles the pale architecture and broken greenery in soft reflection, while the high, luminous sky and delicate recession of the palm grove create an atmosphere very different from the darker theatricality of many devotional oils. Sunkel's palette is restrained - dusty rose, pale ochre, muted green and touches of white - and his brushwork becomes progressively freer in foliage, water and sky.

The signature and date at the lower right give the work unusual documentary importance. It records Sunkel not merely as a teacher or name in an art-historical account, but as a practising landscape painter attentive to Bengal's architecture, vegetation and waterside life. The precise house has not yet been identified. Chinsurah, Serampore and the wider Hooghly corridor offer plausible settings because European and Bengali elite residences there combined classical façades, garden compounds and river or pond access. Any firmer identification should await comparison with estate maps, family archives and early photographs.

Most importantly, the canvas should not be collapsed into the category of "Dutch Bengal devotional painting." It is a signed European topographical landscape belonging to the same artistic ecosystem. Its value here is comparative. The perspectival architecture, atmospheric recession, reflections, carefully diminished figures and integration of a European house into a Bengali environment demonstrate the visual resources circulating in mid-nineteenth-century Bengal. Indian painters did not simply copy such landscapes. They selected from this vocabulary - depth, modelling, sky, vegetation and architectural setting - and made it serve Krishna, Kali, Durga and the divine family.

Shrine, bazaar and the age of reproduction

Early Bengal oils existed alongside a rapidly expanding image economy. Kalighat painters sold watercolours on paper to pilgrims and urban visitors, reducing figures to sweeping contour and brilliant washes. Battala and other presses issued woodcuts and metal engravings. Lithographic studios reproduced gods, theatre personalities, nationalist heroes and scenes of domestic life. Reverse-glass paintings, some connected to Chinese production and circulation through Canton, offered another glossy, saturated sacred image. Photography reshaped portraiture and supplied poses. These media did not replace one another in a simple sequence. They borrowed compositions, competed for patrons and sometimes represented the same iconography at radically different prices.

The oil canvas occupied the prestigious end of this market. It required material, time, space and a patron wealthy enough to install it in a mansion, reception room or domestic shrine. Its size and sheen aligned sacred possession with elite status. But the same qualities limited its reach. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, chromolithographs and oleographs could deliver persuasive colour and modelling cheaply and in quantity. Bamapada Banerjee's images were reproduced in Germany; the Calcutta Art Studio and, most famously, Ravi Varma's press transformed painted gods into mass-circulating icons. The unique devotional oil could not compete economically. Its decline was therefore not simply aesthetic failure. It was a consequence of industrial reproduction.

From anonymous workshop to named artist

The Government School of Industrial Art was founded in Calcutta in 1854, providing a more formal setting for drawing, design and eventually fine-art instruction. Painters such as Gangadhar Dey and Pramathanath Mitra became associated with realistic oil portraiture, exhibitions and public recognition. Later artists including Bamapada Banerjee, Annada Prasad Bagchi and others moved within a world where prizes, reproductions, biographies and named authorship increasingly mattered. European academic realism became teachable, examinable and marketable.

This development did not make the anonymous Early Bengal painter obsolete overnight. Workshops continued, and styles overlapped into the twentieth century. It did, however, change the hierarchy of art. A signed academic canvas could enter an exhibition and attach value to an individual career. The devotional workshop object, often unsigned and smoke-darkened, could be relegated to the category of bazaar art. Ironically, the later nationalist Bengal School also defined itself against academic oil, turning towards wash, line, Mughal and Japanese sources. Early Bengal oils consequently fell between established narratives: too hybrid for nationalist purity, too vernacular for academic prestige and too recent for the canonical history of miniature painting.

Rediscovery, connoisseurship and the market

That neglect is now being corrected. Tapati Guha-Thakurta's work on nineteenth-century Bengali visual culture, Partha Mitter's histories of colonial art and recent exhibitions and publications by institutions and galleries have repositioned Early Bengal oils as essential documents of Indian modernity. DAG has assembled and exhibited a substantial corpus, placing the oils beside Kalighat paintings, prints and reverse-glass pictures. The Victoria Memorial Hall and British Museum-linked scholarship have drawn attention to comparable works. Christie's, Sotheby's, Saffronart and Indian auction houses now routinely use the category, even if dates and terminology remain inconsistent.

Auction evidence shows recognition but not a uniformly mature market. Sotheby's London offered a Dutch Bengal Kali in 2012 at £6,000-8,000 and a Krishna and Radha at £4,000-6,000; published market databases record the Kali at approximately US\$11,573. Christie's announced an auction record for an Early Bengal oil in the 2020 Jane and Kito de Boer sale, demonstrating what strong provenance, publication and quality can achieve. A particularly striking benchmark followed at Sotheby's London on 30 September 2025. An anonymous Indian oil of circa 1879, *Untitled (Indian Cook on the So-Called Stand Knife)*, sold for £114,300 against an estimate of £8,000-12,000 - more than nine times the upper estimate. The painting had been commissioned from an Indian artist by Sir Edward Charles Buck in 1879, presented to the German engineer Franz Reuleaux at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880, and retained through Reuleaux's estate and a German collection. Its subject is secular rather than devotional and its precise regional origin is not securely established, so it should not be treated as a direct price comparator for every Early Bengal oil. Nevertheless, the result is highly relevant to the field: it shows the premium that the market can place on an early Indian oil when visual distinction is joined by a near-contemporary documentary chain and a compelling international history.

At the other end of the range, Olympia Auctions sold a first-half nineteenth-century Kali for £1,600 in 2023. An Indigo Art sale recorded ₹11,18,040 for a Kali with Shiva, while a Chaitanya subject in the same sale brought ₹2,61,360. These differences are not contradictions. They reveal a market that is selective, condition-sensitive and still developing a shared hierarchy. The £114,300 Sotheby's result does not lift every anonymous nineteenth-century canvas to six figures; it demonstrates instead how decisively provenance, rarity, subject, condition and narrative can separate an exceptional work from the general category.

Quality matters at several levels. Large, complex and unusual compositions command more attention than repetitive single figures. Early dating, persuasive age, original surface and limited intervention are desirable, although shrine use often makes pristine condition unrealistic. Publication, old photographs, distinguished family provenance and institutional comparators can sharply improve confidence. Iconographic rarity matters. So does visual presence: some paintings are historically interesting but awkward, while the best convert hybrid convention into unforgettable style. The market increasingly rewards works that are both documents and compelling pictures.

Will values rise?

The long-term case for the field is credible, but it should be framed as an argument rather than a guarantee. Supply is inherently finite. The tradition is no longer practised in its historical form; many canvases were damaged by humidity, soot, neglect and aggressive restoration; and a meaningful proportion remains unidentified in old houses or loosely catalogued sales. At the same time, the potential audience is expanding. Collectors of Indian modernism are looking backward to its nineteenth-century foundations. Collectors of miniatures recognise the translation of indigenous conventions into oil. Diaspora patrons respond to devotional subjects, while museums increasingly seek objects that complicate a simple opposition between "traditional India" and "Western modernity."

Three forces could support appreciation. The first is scholarship: clearer chronologies, technical study and workshop groupings can convert anonymous curiosities into an intelligible field. The second is institutional acquisition and exhibition, which creates public comparators. The third is the growth of Indian collecting across both the subcontinent and the diaspora. But risks remain. The loose label encourages misdating; later devotional pictures can be promoted as nineteenth century without material evidence; and heavy restoration can conceal both age and quality. Recent controversies around copies and questioned attributions in Indian art reinforce the need for provenance, technical examination and cautious language.

The most attractive collecting strategy is therefore not to buy indiscriminately because a canvas is called Dutch Bengal. It is to seek works with strong iconography, demonstrable age, coherent style, manageable condition and the possibility of art-historical research. The finest examples remain undervalued relative to their rarity and their importance in the story of Indian painting, but the field will mature through discrimination, not hype. Scholarship is itself a form of value creation: identifying an episode, tracing a print source, locating a mansion or distinguishing an early workshop from a later revival can materially alter how a painting is understood.

Conclusion: a modernity made in translation

Early Bengal oils deserve a place between the histories that have traditionally surrounded them. They followed neither a straightforward line from European master to Indian pupil nor an uncontaminated survival of indigenous tradition. They emerged from ports, shrines, mansions, workshops, art schools, print shops and photographic studios. Dutch Chinsurah contributed an early material environment; British and continental artist-travellers increased the prestige of oil and naturalism; Indian painters selected, altered and domesticated those resources. The resulting images are modern precisely because they are translated objects.

In the Eye of the Beholder group, the range becomes visible. Rādhā and Krishna with the Aṣṭasakhīs preserves the concentrated, emblematic order of devotional painting while using oil to create nocturnal depth. The Śiva family brings European modelling and landscape into the emotional world of a Bengali household. Sunkel's Garden House in Bengal records the colonial environment in which classical architecture, tropical landscape and artistic instruction intersected. One is intimate and mandala-like, one monumental and familial, one topographical and outward-looking. Together they demonstrate why "Dutch Bengal" can never be a single style.

These paintings evoke a vanished era, but they are not merely nostalgic. They record the moment when Indian gods entered canvas without ceasing to be Indian, when imported matter acquired local theology, and when painters whose names are mostly lost negotiated modernity with intelligence and freedom. Their achievement was not to paint like Europeans. It was to discover how oil could speak Bengali.

Selected references and sources

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. *The Making of a New "Indian" Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Mitter, Partha. *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.

DAG. “Early Bengal Oils” and The Babu & the Bazaar: Art from 19th and Early 20th Century Bengal. Online collection and exhibition materials.

Rijksmuseum. Hendrik van Schuylenburgh, The Dutch Factory in Hooghly-Chinsurah, Bengal, 1665; related Bengal VOC collection records.

British Museum, collection record 1990,1031,0.1: Return of Devi Agamani, oil on canvas, Bengal.

Christie’s. A Lasting Engagement: The Jane and Kito de Boer Collection, 23 September 2020, including Anonymous Early Bengal School, Court Scene with Shiva, Brahma and Krishna.

Sotheby’s London. Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art, 8 June 2012, lots 21-22; Indian Art, 16 June 2009, lot 33; Modern & Contemporary South Asian Art, 30 September 2025, lot 22, Anonymous, Untitled (Indian Cook on the So-Called Stand Knife).

Saffronart. Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art, 28 June 2023, notes on Early Bengal oil painting.

Sadhu, Anirban. “Franz Eduard Sunkel and the Emergence of Oil Painting in India.” *Art & Deal*, December 2011-January 2012.

About Eye of the Beholder

Eye of the Beholder is a Switzerland-based gallery and scholarly collection devoted to historically significant Indian and India-related art, rare books and cultural objects. Its holdings bring together Indian miniature painting, Early Bengal and devotional oils, works by European artists in India, and foundational antiquarian books through which the subcontinent was pictured, studied and interpreted. The three paintings discussed in this article - Rādhā and Krishna with the Aṣṭasakhīs, The Family of Śiva, and Franz Eduard Sunkel's A Garden House in Bengal - are all part of the Eye of the Beholder collection. Readers, collectors and institutions are warmly invited to discover the collection at <https://eyeofthebeholder.ch> and to contact the gallery to arrange a private viewing of the paintings.