
*Oral Traditions and Hindu Art*

|  |
| --- |
| **Introduction**  |
|   This illustration, titled *Krishna Observes Radha, "Half Hidden, Half Revealed"*, is from a collection of love poems called the *Sat Sai*, meaning Seven Hundred Verses, by the poet Bihari Lal Chaube. It was painted sometime between 1755 and 1795 by an unknown artist in India. This type of art has many names, including illustration, miniature, and manuscript art. Manuscript art illustrates epics, fables and religious texts, as well providing visualization to oral narratives. The Mughal Empire (1526-1757) established studios at the imperial court to make miniature art inspired by the neighboring Persians. Schools of art also sprung up in the hill kingdoms across the north of India. The numerous small courts in the region offered opportunities for talented painters seeking new opportunities. There, artists developed a distinctive *Pahari* style of painting, which translates to "from the mountains." Surprisingly little is known about the authorship of individual series of paintings, and works cannot be assigned confidently to specific artists. In this painting, the young woman, Radha, visits Krishna to borrow curds for fermenting milk. The poem for this miniature is as follows: *The unmatched brilliance of her earrings shines through her thin garment;* *It seems as if a leafy branch of the Tree of Paradise is glittering on the ocean.* *She looked at me smilingly, after turning back from the door-step;* *She came to take curds, but she planted her love in my heart.* Krishna is the complete human incarnation of Indian Hindu deity Vishnu. While Vishnu takes many forms, Krishna is the best-known, and well-honored. Krishna is easily recognizable in paintings and illustrations due to his blue skin. Legends say it was caused by a poisonous milk he drank as a child. Hindu art frequently depicts Krishna's life, from his early years as a baby and active child to his latter years as a divine lover and faithful protector of the righteous. Each persona provided a unique way for believers to connect with their deity. |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:** 4. RC. 2 Paraphrase or summarize the main events in a story, myth, legend, or novel: identify the theme and provide evidence for the interpretation.  **LH.1:** Read and comprehend history/social studies texts independently and proficiently, and write effectively for a variety of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.**6-8.LH.2.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.**6-8.LH.3.2:** Describe how a text presents information (Examples: *sequentially, comparatively, causally*).**6-8.LH.4.1:** Integrate visual information (Examples: *charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps*) with other information in print and digital texts.**6-8.LH.5.1:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.  | **Compelling Question(s):**  What is the *Sat Sai* or Seven Hundred Verses?Who are the main characters portrayed in this miniature illustration?What do they symbolize?        |
| **Lesson Objectives:** Students will learn about poetry tradition in Hinduism and its mythology through pictorial representations. Through this lesson, students will write a short narrative that describes the object presented on the W2W website.   |
| **Materials**  |
|   [W2W Collections- Ganesha Lesson Plan](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/ganesha.html)[He Spoke of Love: Selected Poems from the Satsai- Bihari Lal, 1596-1663](https://www.hup.harvard.edu/file/feeds/PDF/9780674268746_sample.pdf)[About these Paintings- Kangra Paintings- Bihari Sat Sai](https://www.goloka.com/docs/bihari/about_bihari.html)[The Met- Summer Love in Divine Pleasures: Poems and Paintings of Bihari's Sat Sai](https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/summer-love-in-divine-pleasures)Colored pencils, watercolors, markers, brushes, paper. |
| **Learning Plan**  |
| **Activities** 1. Show students the *Krishna Observes Radha* miniature illustration. Ask them what they see; how many people are there? What are they doing? Describe how they are dressed.
2. Review the materials provided above to introduce student to Hindu mythology. It might be beneficial to begin with the W2W Ganesha lesson plan to introduce students to Hinduism and its related religious practices and pantheon. From this, students will understand the representation of Vishnu and other deities of Hindu pantheon.
3. It is important to note that the Sat Sai poem and the illustration were created by two different artists and that this miniature is the unknown artist’s interpretation of Bihairi’s poem.
4. Read the poem aloud, highlighting the emotional and symbolic elements: the earrings, the leaf-like branch, and the idea of Radha planting love in Krishna’s heart. What emotions are conveyed in the poem?
 |
| **Assessment Suggestions**  After providing sufficient background information on the poetic tradition of the Sat Sai, and its pictorial representations, the teacher will ask students to write a short story describing what the poem describes. They should focus on the poem’s deep emotion and symbolic interaction between the characters.They can additionally create a small drawing of the scene based on their representation. Encourage the inclusion of decorative elements like nature, jewelry, or clothing details, like what is seen in the miniature and Hindu art.  Students will write a short poem or brief description that accompanies their image, inspired by the Sat Sai poem. This can be a personal reflection or a creative description of the scene they drew.   |
| **Extensions**  Students can select a different poem from the [He Spoke of Love: Selected Poems from the Satsai- Bihari Lal, 1596-1663](https://www.hup.harvard.edu/file/feeds/PDF/9780674268746_sample.pdf) or other literary works from Indian mythology and create a miniature illustration representing what they understand from the verses. |