

Rijksmuseum – 3 June 2018

Isabella Nardi, independent researcher

Kṛṣṇa Overturning the Cart: unfolding the visual history of a page from the “Palam” Bhāgavata Purāṇa

This lecture will contextualise a miniature painting titled *Kṛṣṇa Overturning the Cart* in the Rijksmuseum’s collection. The folio belongs to the “Palam” *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, a widely dispersed series of paintings executed in northern India between circa 1520 and 1530. This work is considered to be the earliest surviving illustrated example of Book X of the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

The presentation will first provide essential information on the “Palam” *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and will then concentrate on the folio in the Rijksmuseum. The analysis will also engage in comparisons with other coeval works, such as the *Caurapañcāśikā* (‘The Fifty Verses of a Love-Thief’), a refined and influential manuscript dated between 1525 and 1550.

The lecture will reveal a crucial issue in the study of early sixteenth century north Indian painting. This period is not only characterised by a great variety of visual traditions, as exemplified by Sultanate, Jain and early Hindu manuscripts and illustrated folios, but also by a scarcity or lack of inscriptional evidence. In fact, the absence of a colophon complicates situating the “Palam” *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in space and time. The study of this material relies on art historical methods, including stylistic and comparative analyses, whose interpretation has not found wide consensus among scholars.

Isabella Nardi (PhD, SOAS) specializes in South Asian art history with particular reference to painting and visual culture from Rajasthan (16th to 20th centuries). Currently, she is researching the history of devotional painting and photography from the Hindu pilgrimage town of Nathdwara. In the past she worked and published on Sanskrit technical treatises on the theory of painting and their relation to the practice of Indian traditional arts. Formerly, she was Research Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Visiting Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Oregon and Cleveland State University.