



A nobleman and his guests watching a nautch (dance)

Not on display

Title/Description: A nobleman and his guests watching a nautch (dance)

Born: 1830 c.

Object Type: Drawing

Materials: Gouache, Paper

Measurements: Unframed: (h. 246 x w. 306 x d. 1 mm) Framed: (h. 422 x w. 524 x d. 16mm)

Accession Number: 765

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: Asia, Delhi, India

School/Style: Indian Miniatures

By 1830 when this picture was painted, the Indo-Islamic style had also embraced Western ideas of painting. Consequently here we can see indications of all the styles. The *Nautch* girls were traditional dancers in Hindu temples but by 1830 had become a well established entertainment at court. Here they are shown whirling in a north Indian *Kathak* dance, wearing the bright colours and swinging costumes of Hindu dancers. Their faces and hair are Hindu style and their hands are reddened with henna, usual for any important occasion. The whole ceiling area is covered by a red *shamiyana*, or decorated awning. The pillars of the hall are Hindu style, but the court setting with the ruler and his courtiers at ease on a carpet enjoying *huqqas* and a tray of *paan* is typically Mughal. The attempt at some perspective and at realism in shading the faces probably comes from Western influence. This could be a "Company" painting commissioned by a foreigner living in India at that time.

Description taken from the 'Art From The Indian Sub-Continent In The Sainsbury Centre' catalogue by Margaret A. Willey (Sainsbury Centre, UEA, 1995).
