

INDIAN DRAWINGS

BY ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, D.Sc.

groups and *genre* studies. Two examples of these are reproduced on Plate XVI. *Plate* The group of seated women, some playing musical instruments, recalls the qualities of fifteenth century Italian wood-cutting. The lower drawing represents, with a sense of delicate intimacy, an interior scene in the very early morning, where the women of the house are rising and putting on their *sāris* before the day has quite dawned.

Characteristic feminine figures appear also in the Magdalene of Plate XVII., *Plate* which may be an adaptation of an European original.

I return from the discussion of the three Hindū portraits, and of the drawings *Plate* of women, to two drawings of a rather different character, in which the number of figures represented is very large. The first of these, the Siege of a Fort (Plate XVIII.) probably dates from the earliest part of the seventeenth century. It is suggestive rather of early mediæval French than of Persian influence. The closely grouped figures and the outline of the great fort, are drawn with extraordinary delicacy and refinement. The drawing, although so damaged, is further of special interest as illustrating the methods of reproduction employed: it is really a pouncing, of which the outline has been partially inked in with a fine brush.

A second, much later drawing—probably early eighteenth century—is the sketch *Plate* of a water-fête, reproduced on Plate XIX. The scene depicted is taking place at night: the *grandees* and nobles are entertaining parties of their friends on gaily illuminated barges, where jesters, musicians and dancing-girls are singing and playing. Especially in the dancing figures on the lower boat there is an exquisite sense of rhythmic movement. Such scenes may still be witnessed every year on the Ganges at Benares, when for two or three days after the Holi festival the river

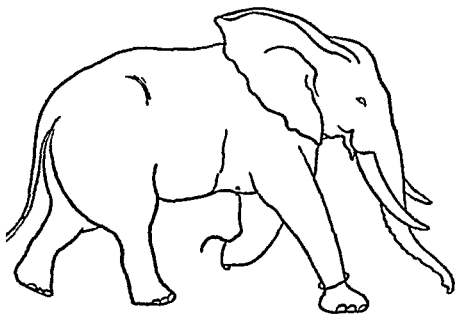


Fig. 11. Running Elephant.

is crowded night and day with holiday makers in boats and barges of every description. One may see the long graceful gondola of the Raja whose palace touches the waters of the further bank, the gaily decorated barge of the silk-weavers' guild, and a host of lesser boats that crowd round the provision barges, or those where singers and dancers are providing entertainment just as the drawing represents them.

The drawings of animals are amongst the most accomplished and most perfect examples of Indian art of the seventeenth century. How far the tradition of animal drawing is at all Persian, and how far indigenous, it is difficult to say. It is certain that we find very good and vital drawings of animals in the quite purely Hindū work of the Tanjore school, and also, that whereas in Persian painting wild animals are regarded as creatures to be hunted rather than understood, in Indian work their own specific and even individual character is delineated as affectionately as in the case of the portraits of human beings. The elephant is drawn with especial knowledge and skill, as may be seen in Fig. 11, and in Plate II.

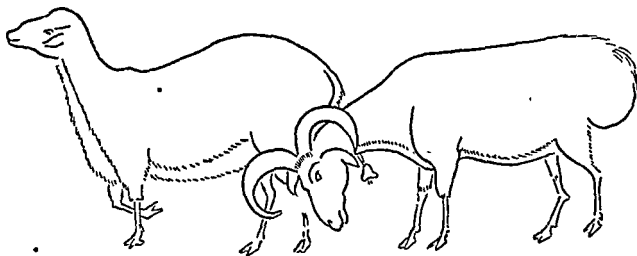


Fig. 12. Himalayan Sheep.

- Not only, however, the elephant (always well rendered in Indian art) but all manner of other animals, wild and tame, are represented in the drawings. The runaway buffalo of Plate XX. has all the vitality and vigour which we find in the finest of Japanese animal drawing, while the somewhat demure satisfaction of the tame rhinoceros with bells round its neck (Plate XXI.) is altogether delightful. The rendering of movement in the drawing of four running deer is particularly good (Plate XXII.);* almost equally so is the slow nibbling progress of two
- XX.
XXI.
XXII.

*Cf. the hunted deer of British Museum Or. 1362, fol. 150a. For other fine animal pictures see British Museum Add. 18579, especially fol. 169b; Stowe Or. 16, fols. 48, 58.

Himalayan sheep (Fig. 12). The jungle scene reproduced on Plate XXII. *Plate* is full of life and movement: it is part of a longer strip, a decorative panel designed for some purpose unknown, perhaps for enamelling or painting on wood. The little drawing of a grasshopper (Fig. 14) shows that the smaller creatures were not forgotten.* The drawing of a partridge, on skin (Plate XXIII.) *Plate* recalls the beautiful bird studies of Dürer.

Some of the best animal drawings are those representing the capture of

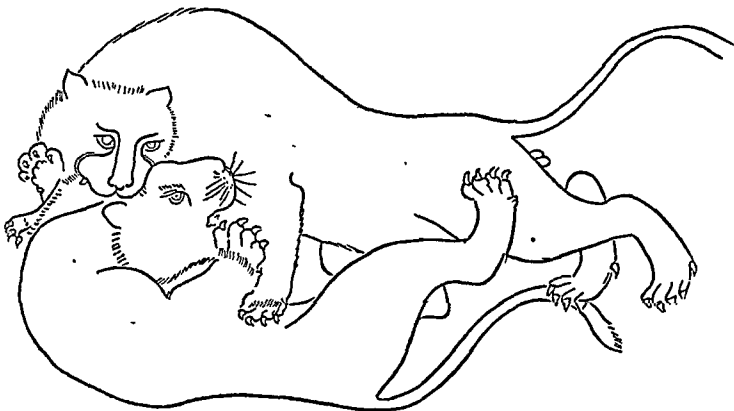


Fig. 13. Leopards fighting.

one animal by another, or the set fights between two animals, which from the earliest times in India and Persia have been characteristic motifs in decorative art.† They are often especially well exemplified in the gold brush-drawn borders of manuscripts and picture albums (cf. British Museum Add. 21928): in these

* Butterflies are represented in many of the pictures in *Dārā Shukuh's Album*, now at the India Office.

† For a pictorial treatment of fighting animals see British Museum Add. 22470, 9b, and Add. 18803, 13.

borders every phase of jungle life is represented,* and there are combats even of mythological animals of Chinese extraction.

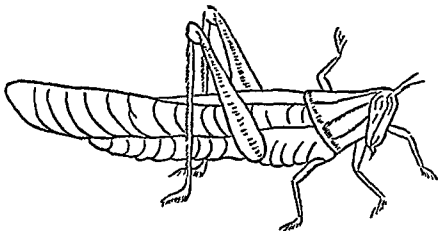


Fig. 14. Grasshopper.

XXI. Many of the drawings of lions (Plate XXI.) and leopards have a wonderfully tense, wiry outline, suggesting the underlying muscular forms, and in this respect are reminiscent of Assyrian sculpture. Of this muscular, wiry drawing, Figs. 13



Fig. 15. Leopard and deer.

and 15—the latter one of the little, quick thumbnail sketches sometimes met with—are good examples. It may be added, that beside the animal drawings referred to already, there are many curious drawings of a semi-mythological character; for example, drawings of animals whose bodies are completely built up of the bodies of other animals and human beings, also collections of animals of every kind, as if for a

regular Noah's ark, as well as drawings of single dragons, phoenixes, (of Chinese derivation) and chimæras of various sorts. There are also, of course, the various pictures (e.g., Plates IV., XVIII., XXIV., and Figure 17) in which the animals play a subordinate though important part in the scenes represented; amongst these are many hunting scenes, as well as pictures in which the animals are treated as dear companions of men.

Amongst the drawings so far referred to, the greater number may be spoken of as Mughal, though some can only be described as Indian, and a few are definitely Hindu or 'Rajpūt.' I now proceed to the description of purely Indian drawings, which can be definitely designated as Rajpūt; in these there is no trace of foreign

* For a particularly fine drawing of a charging bull, see *British Museum Add.* 27262, fol. 140b, lower border.

PLATE XXI.

LION and RHINOCEROS.

Collection of Bābu Gogonendronāth Tagore.

Pages 18 and 20.

