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## The Ganga Singh collection of paintings at the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

James J. White

### Abstract

Fourteen botanical paintings by Ganga Singh (1895–1970) are owned by the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh in north India. Nine of them are illustrated.

Botanical watercolors and drawings by Thakur Ganga (Rai Sahib) Singh (1895–1970) are well represented in the collection of the Forest Research Institute (see “The Ganga Singh and P. N. Sharma collection of watercolors at the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun” in *Huntia* 9(2): 165–174). Fourteen of Singh’s large oil paintings on hard board are owned by the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh, the common capital of the states of Punjab and Haryana, located 260 kilometers north of Delhi. Most or perhaps all of these paintings are signed and dated “Ganga Singh, 1962.”

Information on the acquisition of these paintings is unavailable, but they almost certainly were acquired by Dr. M. S. Randhawa, distinguished art historian and botanist, who played a prominent role in acquiring paintings and in building this and other museums in Punjab. Randhawa highly praised Ganga Singh in his book *Beautiful trees and gardens* (New Delhi, 1961). The Gallery’s self-published guidebook, *Govt. Museum and Art Gallery Chandigarh: A handy guide* (Chandigarh, 1985), includes the name Ganga Singh in a list of artists working in the traditional style. This

guide, incidentally, provides an interesting description of the museum’s general collection, which has moved among Lahore, Amritsar, Simla, and Patiala, eventually finding a permanent home following the construction of the present museum, which was designed by noted French architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965).

Nine of Singh’s paintings are reproduced here. The others are titled “*Erythrina suberosa* Roxb.,” “*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* Linn.” (Chinese Hibiscus), “*Saraca indica* Linn.” (Asoka), “*Delonix regia* Rafin.” (Royal Poinciana), and “*Glad-iolus*.” Ten of these paintings currently are on loan to the Department of Architecture, Union Territory, Chandigarh.

### Acknowledgments

I am extremely grateful to Director Vidya Nand Singh and to his colleagues, namely Curatorial Assistant Poonam Khanna and Shivani Gupta, who gave me a tour of the museum’s conservation laboratory in January 1996. Shri S. M. Dhama took great pains in photographing the artworks, and Hunt Institute photographer Frank Reynolds further improved upon them with computer scanning. In India they say that guests are Gods, and my friends Mr. and Mrs. Raju A. S. Minhas of Chandigarh treated me accordingly. Mr. Shri Dhar, who has assisted me in so many ways during my visits to India, had my Shatabdi Express ticket to Chandigarh waiting for me on my arrival in Delhi.

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Figure 1. "Hydrangea," oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



Figure 2. "Sun Flower," oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

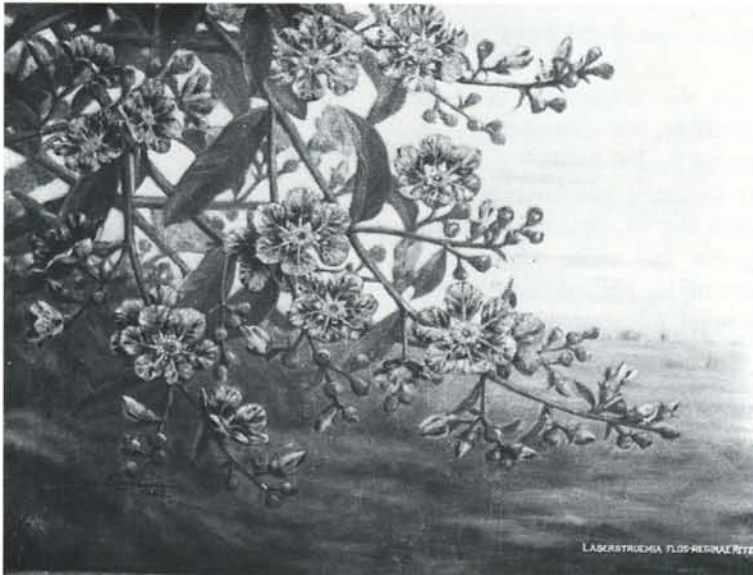


Figure 3. "*Lagerstroemia flos-reginae* Retz." (*L. speciosa* (L.) Pers., Queen's Crape Myrtle, Pride-of-India), oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

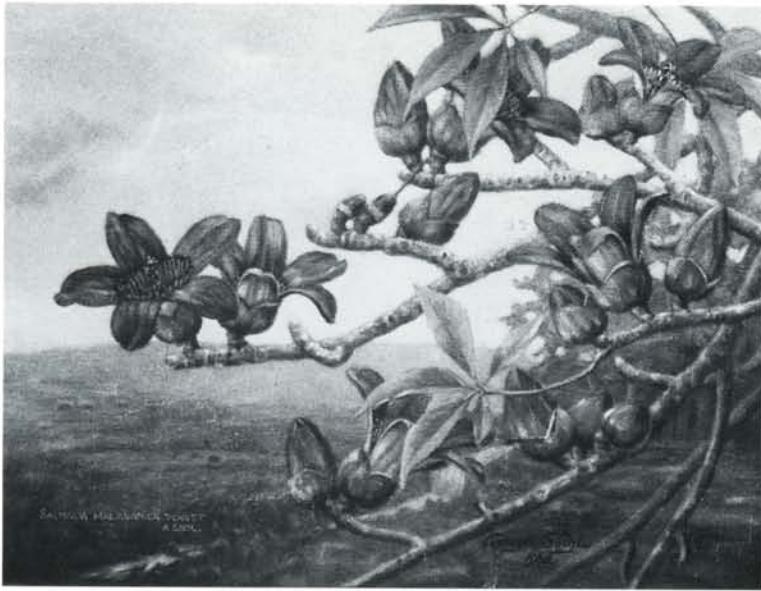


Figure 4. "*Salmalia malabarica* Schott & Endl." (*Bombax ceiba* L., Red Silk-Cotton Tree), oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

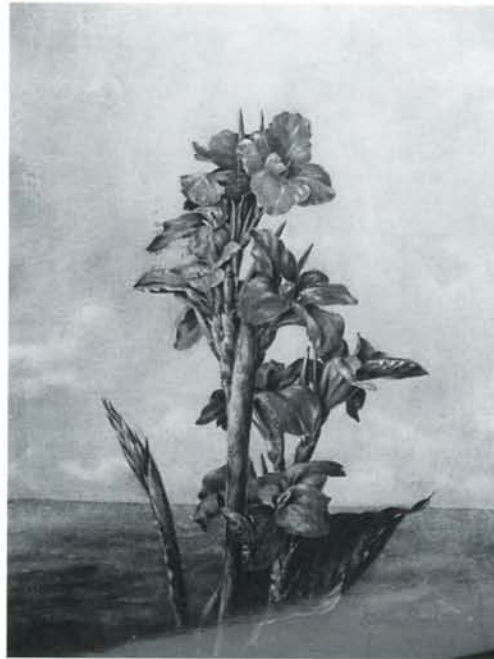


Figure 5. "*Canna*," oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



Figure 6. "*Rhododendron arboreum* Sm." (Tree Rhododendron), oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



Figure 7. "*Bauhinia variegata* Linn." (Orchid Tree, Mountain Ebony), oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



Figure 8. "*Hibiscus mutabilis* Linn." (Cotton Rose), oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



Figure 9. "*Butea frondosa* Koenig" (*B. monosperma* (Lam.) Taub., Flame-of-the-Forest), oil on board by Ganga Singh. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

