

# Cultural Exchange in Eighteenth-Century India: Poetry and Paintings from Kishangarh

By Heidi Pauwels

This book studies the hybrid intellectual culture of eighteenth-century late-Mughal India, tracing the circulation of poetic and art styles between cosmopolitan Delhi and provincial centers. It presents a case study of the Rajput principality of Kishangarh, which is famous for its paintings that were stylistically influenced by Mughal models, but that thematically portrayed mostly the love play of the Hindu divinities Krishna and Radha. What is not so well known is that Kishangarh was also a literary center, not only of the Krishna devotional poetry in Old Hindi (Braj Bhasha) that inspired several of its best-known paintings, but also of poetry in "Rekhta," the new medium that was the rage in Delhi from the 1720s onward, and that is now called Urdu. This poetry too was illustrated in painting of a more calligraphic nature, as the one featured on the cover of this book (preserved at the Los Angeles County Museum of the Arts). The book investigates these "provincial" developments in the larger context of the circulation of painting styles and literary aesthetics in the Mughal empire, tracing continuities as well as ruptures with earlier "High Mughal" trends in this "Late Mughal" period on the eve of British influence.

Highlighted in this book are the works of Savant Singh (1699-1764), alias Nagaridas, who was a prolific poet in Old Hindi (Braj Bhasha). In the first half of the eighteenth century, when he was the crown prince of Kishangarh, he commissioned the famous painter Nihalchand to illustrate his own devotional poetry to Krishna. The book studies in detail this creative transformation of poetry in painting. It does so for documented cases, including some that have only recently come to light, and in addition it also makes the connections for some other paintings that may be related to Nagaridas's poetry. In addition to poetry in Braj Bhasha, Nagaridas also composed poetry in Rekhta. The book studies in detail how he responded to the new Delhi style that preferred a Persianized register

and specific aesthetic conventions. In particular, Nagaridas acknowledged inspiration of Vali, who is now considered to be “the father of Urdu.” This last aspect of Nagaridas’ oeuvre has been omitted (perhaps suppressed?) in contemporary Hindi studies of his work. Conversely, Nāgrīdās does not figure at all in studies of Urdu literature. Using newly discovered manuscript sources, this book provides a first chapter in the as yet unwritten history of the reception of early Urdu in non-Muslim provincial milieus. It demonstrates the exchange of poetry between cultural communities before the hardening into “Hindu-Hindi” and “Muslim-Urdu.” It also shows the impact of this exchange in the medium of painting, including calligraphies of Nagaridas’ poetry in Rekhta, as on the cover of the book.

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STUDIES IN ASIAN  
ART AND CULTURE

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॥उसहीकीबुदिसिद्धकीकिनीजुतामैहोय।कादरनादरकुसुमकाकलकहायासोय॥२॥

॥कलतसीकीकलकलै।जोसरजकीधुप  
जहाइस्कतहआपहै।कादरनादररुप  
।करुकिथानदिस्काका।सोमाजमबर  
।सोसाहियसोइस्सवत्।करिकासकैंगर  
॥२॥



।सरनिदाहोयइस्कसो।सोदेवैसवषीथानि  
वासहदानवजै।सोइसुनियतोया।शुनि  
यायएकीरकाहैसवजितनीजाता।वि  
गुरइस्कमसीअरे।सवकीपिस्तीवाभा

।सादेजेयारेसवै।जहापिधनअनपार।इ  
स्कअनलमस्ती।जियै।सिहस्तीअसवार।  
।ध्यायाइस्कलपेटमै।लागीसुसुचपेट।  
।सोइआयाधलकतमै।अेरनरेयापेटाद्य

।जरवाजीविनधलकको।कामनमवरै  
कोयाएकइस्कवाजीअरे।जावाजीसोसि  
याअसिसकाटिकरनअरे।अएरकैपावा  
इस्कविमनकेवीरमै।असाहैतोआवाद्य

।कनपाकमोइलकमै।बलेसुधरप्रदियाव  
।किरयेवाकंसोदला।इस्कविमनमैआवा  
।कबनएअवागलतलका।अ।कि।कनाअ  
नेकाइस्कविमनकेवीरमै।आवाअननाक  
॥२॥

।इस्कविमनमदइवका।जहोनजावैकोवा  
जावेगोजीवेनही।जीवैसुवैरातोय॥२॥  
अरेइस्ककेविमनमै।समिकेएगधुरिआवे  
।वीचराइकेइवना।कवटमो।दिववावाइ

।मारेकिरकिरमारियै।वसनीरसोइवाकि  
येअदाजतजुअको।जहादेवामहववा  
।आगिकपीरतमैआदिल।जगेअसकेतोराहि  
याअदमदइवको।सदभमवैपीर॥२॥

।आगिकविमअपनाअरे।रिदेवैकुलाया  
।वेनिमाफमदइवको।करैइरअनमायाए  
।इतकरैजजतावेरे।मदबवैकेनैन।आ  
।कि।किरकीगिहसो।धैलेतवही।वेनारह।

।धुरमवसममदइवमो।धजरकियेसवार।नि  
कलैकोहमोरगे।आगिकएजयर॥२॥  
।इस्कवेतसो।नदिदलो।आविबेउसवासा।  
।सचीटसो।शिरममै।धउवलेसावसा॥२॥

।रागसोरवा॥इकला  
जा॥इस्कवाजीपुसक  
जहैवो॥जेकोईइ  
स्ककमायाजोडै॥सि  
धरसूलीअंगनमोडै॥२॥

।बलककियायाजिकअरे।हसनेदोकोइत  
।सहनेको।आगिककिया।मानकोमदइववा  
।अथमोसो।जमीकतै।समगसुविचैत।ज  
।टतसुसहा।धिकै।दिनवसुकरिजेतर

।अमितपूजाएकदिला।एदिमागमदियाय  
।जगेजरवअशियनको।सवेगवैठजिनय  
।२॥।पावेसरेनदिदरके।बुरीवसकीपी  
।जो।जावै।जाकेलगे।महरजहरकेतीर॥२॥

।वीरनिगाइकेजगे।दरदधुकराहायाज  
।राजीजरहसो।मिलेतरकेघाया।अए  
।तवीवठिया।जघराअसवैकाहाया  
।वटीइस्ककीकेकयह।उतरे।शिरकेगाया॥२॥

।कसोतुपै।करि।मली।बुनियेसवैनिहाना  
।वसकीजागीरहा।बुटेपूजा।नास्या।  
।जातीरजमधरविपै।विपैविपैसैफ।न  
।दिवतरे।ताही।बियै।दै।कइस्ककीकेकपद

।अरे।विपारे।साकं।जादिरहै।देनागाको  
।कुरिदिलवारुदमै।विपै।स्ककीआगा।द  
।आतसलपेटेगकी।धुसवैदिवदिरका  
।आरवीइस्कवासरती।जगकनवागी।नाया  
॥२॥

।उमैआगिरइस्ककी।जले।अै।अर।म।च  
।नेनके।पी।असवि।व।धुटे।धुटेके।धामार।  
।गिरहै।नी।जरेहै।।उतलकनसधुलेन।इ  
।अ।विये।जा।पी।यके।इयहै।मदेवै।ने।ना।ग

॥केलेसजअनेक॥इस्कवाजसिरताजको॥इस्कपियायाएक॥२॥

॥इस्कवाजसिरताजको॥इस्कपियायाएक॥२॥