CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY INDIA
HEIDI RIKA MARIA PAUWELS

CULTURAL EXCHANGE
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY INDIA
POETRY AND PAINTINGS FROM KISHANGARH
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It has been a true privilege to work on the material of this book. It all started out as a literary study of the Kṛṣṇa bhakti poet, Nāgaridās. I was aware that some of his poems were illustrated in the elegant paintings of the Kishangarh school. As I read through his oeuvre and pursued manuscripts of his work, however, I quickly discovered how much more there was to the topic, especially with regard to visual sources. I found myself outside the comfort zone of my own discipline and it became clear I needed to complement my textual approach with art-historical and historical methodology.

I am very grateful for the help I received in broadening my horizons, without which this book would not have been possible. For initiating me into art-historical approaches, I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Navina Haidar of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Dr. Haidar wrote her excellent 1995 Oxford dissertation (which unfortunately has remained unpublished) on The Kishangarh School of Painting (c. 1680–1850), and is the world’s expert on the topic. She very kindly advised me on the third chapter, on Kishangarh art, during our April 2012 meetings in New York and in correspondence since. I am also grateful to Dr. Gursharan Sidhu from Seattle for generously sharing his insights with me, and illustrating it all with beautiful examples from the Elvira and Gursharan Sidhu collection. I cherish very much the delightful moments spent with the Sidhus and the treat of their great hospitality. I am also grateful for stimulating conversations with Molly Aitken of the City University of New York and Dipti Khera of New York University and Sonal Khullar, my colleague at the University of Washington, Seattle.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND OTHER CONVENTIONS
Throughout this book both Hindi and Urdu poetry are cited, and on occasion a little bit of Persian. For the Hindi I have followed the transliteration system of the prestigious Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary (OHED) by Stuart McGregor, but for quotes from Old Hindi, I have preserved the neutral vowel “a,” which is silent in modern Hindi but counts as a syllable in the Old Hindi poetry.

For the Urdu and Persian, as per convention, I have not transliterated that neutral vowel. I have followed Frances Pritchett’s transliteration system in her Nets of Awareness (1994: xi), with two exceptions for the sake of consistency with the Hindi. First, the cin is transcribed as “c” whereas “ch” (used by Pritchett) is reserved for the aspirate palatal, so as not to confuse the two. Second, the nūn-e ghunnah is, like the corresponding nasal indicator in Hindi, transliterated with either the tilde on top of the vowel or as the appropriate nasal from the Hindi alphabet before a consonant. Also differing from Pritchett, I spell sher rather than shi’r, since it is a term widely used in secondary literature. Following the Persian conventions leads to some inconsistency with the Hindi, as the śīn is transliterated as “sh” rather than “ś,” but the advantage is it allows for spelling Shāh rather than Śāh.

The texts of Nāgaridās’s works follow the vulgate Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā edition by Gupta (1965), unless indicated otherwise. Since most manuscripts of Nāgaridās’s Rekhtā work are in Devanagari, I have transliterated it as Hindi, rather than as Urdu. This is justified because at this period there was not yet much concern with orthography of Persian loans. However, when quoting the poetry of Valī, I have used the Urdu transliteration and based the text on the standard edition of his Kulliyāt by the foremost Valī scholar, Sayyid Nūr ul-Ḥasan Hāshmi (1982).

In order not to overload the visual image of the text, I have refrained from giving diacritics for place names and the names of scripts and languages (though for little-known languages like Dakhani, I have given diacritics, mainly to distinguish the language from the term denoting the region, “Deccani”). Similarly, names of gods come with diacritics. Commonly occurring words in the literature, such as the occupational names munshi, zamindar, subedar, vazir, and so on, or caste names such as Khatri, Kayasth, and Brahmin, have been given without diacritics and not in italics. For the names of authors and their Hindi
works, I have followed the generally accepted model of R.S. McGregor’s standard encyclopedic work (1984); for Urdu and Persian, I have again followed Pritchett (1994). In several cases it was difficult to determine whether to transliterate according to Hindi or Urdu. For transliteration from Devanagari I write Khān, whereas for Urdu names I have Ḳhān. I have opted for “Rekhtā” rather than “Reḳhtah” throughout, because I am mainly working from Devanagari versions of poetry in that idiom. Names of meters have been given with full diacriticis and capitalized in italics, such as Dohā, Pada, Kavitta, Ġhazal; names of musical genres also have diacritics and are capitalized: Khyāl, Dhrupad, Qawwāli. These choices are somewhat arbitrary, but I have tried to be consistent, and I hope they will not distract too much from the content of the book.