CHAPTER 2

Sufi in the Garb of a Yogi: Visual and Literary Articulations of Sanctity

O, I want to go with the *jōgī*
With earrings in my ears

I want to go with the *jōgī*
This *jōgī* entered my heart
Truth be told, I swear by the Quran

O, I want to go with the *jōgī*
And the bridal mark on my forehead

I want to go with the *jōgī*
This *jōgī* braided my hair
This *jōgī* is my religion and my faith

BULLEH SHAH[1]

In one of the most popular Pakistani music programs in recent television history—Coke Studio—Punjabi pop singer Fariha Pervez sings these lines from a song titled "Jōgī."[2] Arranged with a jazz and orchestra ensemble from Serbia, the song is a pop-fusion rendition of a much-loved eighteenth-century Punjabi mystical poem, traditionally sung as a *qawwālī*, a form of devotional music unique to Muslim South Asia. In one *qawwālī* version, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan includes the verse, "O this is no *jōgī* but an aspect of God, the guise of the *jōgī* suits Him well."[3]

Qawwālīs are typically sung in Sufi gatherings and their main theme is passionate love (*'ishq*) for God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the saints of Islam. Since at least the fourteenth century, *qawwālī* has been used as an aid in inducing mystical states within seekers and to open pathways toward union with God. Only more recently, in the twentieth century, has the genre become

1 Rohail Hyatt, "Jogi | Fariha Pervez & Muazzam Ali Khan | Season 6 | Coke Studio Pakistan," YouTube video, 7:03, October 20, 2013, accessed January 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6StD5G12vjM.

2 Hyatt, "Jogi."

3 EMI Pakistan, "Ni Main Jana Jogi De Naal | Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan | Showcase South Asia—Vol.16," YouTube video, 29:01, February 8, 2016, accessed January 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G92_K5xdGk, starting at 6:44.

part of popular music. An audience steeped in local folklore and expressions of devotional piety would immediately understand the context and literary background of the verses discussed above. The audience would know that the eighteenth-century poem is referring to the Punjabi folk romance of the lovers Hir and Ranjha, in which Ranjha becomes a Nath yogi, follower of the Hindu god Shiva. In the romance, Ranjha represents God or an aspect of God. Hir is the seeking soul yearning for union with the beloved. In the verses sung by Fariha Pervez and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, it is Hir's voice that longs to go with the beloved who has become a *jōgī*. For the informed audience, all of humanity is contained in that one, seeking soul. This particular Punjabi poem, while reminding the listener of a popular tragic romance, triggers a deeper collective memory in which the figure of the yogi performs a central role, one expressed through literature, painting, and devotional practice alike.

By the eighteenth century, the yogi was a recurring figure in the Indo-Muslim cultural imagination. The story of Hir-Ranjha, composed as a Sufi romance in 1766 by Waris Shah, is one relatively late example of a work of Muslim devotional literature incorporating Indic tropes, in a history that stretches back centuries. How did it come to be that Muslims in India saw the image of the yogi as an emblem of the divine beloved: a motif so deeply imbedded in their imagination that even in the contemporary context, it continues to reverberate with otherworldly longing in the form of song, poetry, and romance?

Jōgī is the Persian way of saying yogi. A yogi or yogini is someone who practices yoga and is historically associated with Hindu paths of renunciation. In Carl Ernst's words, the idea of the yogi "is perhaps the most successful Indian export in the global marketplace of spirituality."[4] Throughout history there have been instances of different cultural, racial, or religious denominations taking on the garb, or another aspect, of the Hindu yogi. Today we see more self-identified "yogis" in the West than perhaps in South Asia itself. In this chapter, I will discuss one of the earliest visual articulations of this adoption, examining how court artists between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries employed the image of the yogi as a symbol for a uniquely Islamic mystical ideal. In other words, this chapter inquires into how the devotional figure of the yogi, taken from outside the pale of Islam proper, enabled Muslims to engage with their own ontologies. Since illustrated Sufi romances in which yogis played key roles were the first platforms for the visual articulation of Muslim devotional expression in South Asian painting, it is befitting to begin

4 Carl Ernst, "Muslim Interpreters of Yoga," in Diamon and Aitken, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, 59.

this chapter with a discussion of the meaning of the yogi for an early modern Muslim audience as found in these romances.

The presence of yogis and yoginis in paintings made for Muslim patrons with a specifically Islamic objective is a ubiquitous theme that has received very little attention in the context of art historical scholarship. The premise of incorporating images of Hindu ascetics into the iconography of Muslim devotion provides a unique window into larger networks of Hindu-Muslim interaction: phenomena that persisted and developed over time.

Focusing on depictions of yogis in paintings made between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the present chapter discusses two streams of representation that show the persistence of an important subject across eras. The first section of the chapter focuses on the presence of the yogi in romance literature written in local Hindustani languages by Sufi authors between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Two illustrated Sufi romances that are key for understanding thematic continuities and coalescences are *Chandāyan* and *Mṛigāvatī*. The second section highlights examples from some early Mughal-period albums, particularly paintings made or assembled in the early seventeenth century for Prince Salim, the future emperor Jahangir (1569–1627). Analyzing artwork from this period of transition helps us map the growth of devotional themes and their accompanying iconography from the sixteenth into the seventeenth century. As I discussed in the Introduction, one of the aims of this book is to show how influences and sources from early Indo-Muslim painting helped develop a new subgenre of Hindustani painting under the patronage of Jahangir's two grandchildren, Dara Shikoh and Jahanara Begum, in the mid-seventeenth century. Pictorial conventions that were used to illustrate yogis in early Sufi romances and during the time of Emperor Akbar and Prince Salim were later adapted for the representation of known Sufi saints.

Instances of interaction between Muslim and Hindu spiritualities have a thousand-year-old history that traverses social hierarchies. This interaction is most frequently expressed through literature, and after the fifteenth century, in paintings. There are numerous seventeenth and eighteenth-century paintings showing Sufis and yogis congregating together, either around shrines or in the countryside, often listening to devotional musical gatherings or silently meditating (Fig. 19). Beginning around the late eleventh century, when Muslim rule began to stamp its political authority on the subcontinent, many philosophers, theologians, and Sufis became enamored with yogic teachings and found various practical uses for them. Although this chapter primarily addresses the importance of yogis for Islamic spirituality and its subsequent artistic expression, it must be clarified that this particular aspect of yogis was not the only mode of reception for a Muslim audience. In many fantasy tales such as the *Hamzanāma* [*The Story of Hamza*] and the *Kathasaritsāgara* [*Ocean*

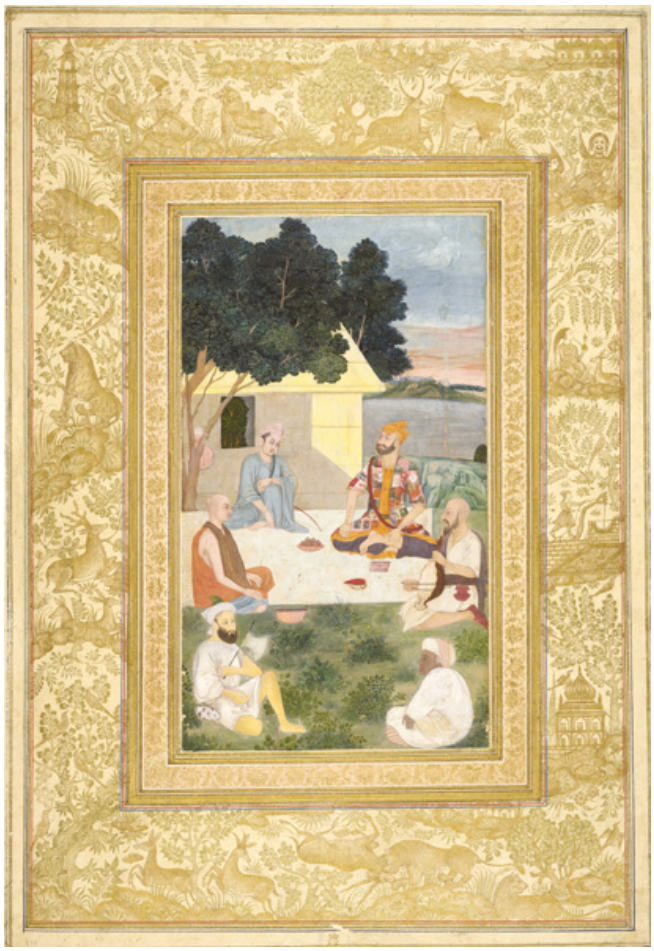

FIGURE 19
A congregation of Indian ascetics, ca. 1700. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 44.8 × 31.4 cm. British Museum, London (1920,0917,0.30)

of Rivers of Stories]—both illustrated for Akbar—tantric yogis are identified as wizards accruing boundless power. They are seen as exotic, fear-inducing sorcerers with access to formidable magic.[5] Additionally, rulers used the art of yogic magic to summon powerful yoginis during warfare.[6] Nobility also frequently visited yogis and yoginis for guidance and for their blessings. Early Sufis entering India were so impressed by yogic spiritual practices that they appropriated many breathing techniques and meditation postures that are used to this day.[7] It is also possible that in order to assert their own authority in a largely Hindu population, Sufi masters began using a yogic vocabulary, couching their teachings in a language familiar to the vast majority. In short,

5 For a detailed discussion on yogis in the Indian literary imagination, see Diamond and Aitken, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, 202–09.

6 Carl Ernst, "Being Careful with the Goddess: Yoginis in Persian and Arabic Texts," in *Performing Ecstasy: The Poetics and Politics of Religion in India*, ed. Pallabi Chakrovorty and Scott Kugle (Delhi: Manohar, 2009), 199.

7 Carl Ernst, "Two Versions of a Persian Text on Yoga and Cosmology, Attributed to Shaikh Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī," *Elixir* 2 (2006): 69–76.

for Muslim settlers entering South Asia in the medieval period, the yogi had a multilayered significance.

1 The Yogi in Medieval Sufi Romances

Since the medieval period, Sufis have freely traversed diverse social strata and inhabited multifaceted communal roles. Composers of romances such as Amir Khusro (d. 1325), Mulla Da'ud (active during the fourteenth century) and Qutban (active during the early sixteenth century) were representatives of imperial courts as well as Sufi orders. Aditya Behl has shown in his work on *Madhumālatī* and *Mṛigāvatī* how Sultanate-period epic romances written in local *Hindavi* languages simultaneously functioned as morality tales, performances for court and public entertainment, and, perhaps most intriguingly, as provocative yet deeply allegorical instructional manuals written by Sufi guides for their acolytes.[8] All of the major epics, beginning with the Chishti Sufi Mulla Da'ud's *Chandāyan* (completed in 1379), are located in a mythic India where Hindu rajas hold sway and yogis, necromancers, fairies, and demons roam the land. It is against this backdrop that the protagonist, often portrayed as a prince, falls in love with a beautiful princess. In these "hero's quest" stories, the lovers are parted after a brief and unfulfilled initial union, leaving the hero distraught and in desperate search of his lost beloved. No one seems to know the way to the princess's city—except for the *jōgī*.

1.1 *Chandāyan*

Medieval Sufi romances, known locally as *prema-kahānīs*, or love stories, often derived from indigenous folk tales. The *Chandāyan*, for instance, was a popular folk story and part of the oral tradition of the Ahir community, a Hindu caste of cow-herders from north and central India.[9] Sultanate-period Sufi authors who wrote first and foremost for a Muslim audience reworked and modified

8 Aditya Behl, Simon Weightman, and Manjhana, *Madhumālatī: An Indian Sufi Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Aditya Behl, Wendy Doniger, and Suhravardi, *The Magic Doe, Qutbban Suhravardī's Mirigāvatī: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a detailed study on the *Chandāyana*, see Qamar Adamjee, "Strategies for Visual Narration in the Illustrated *Chandayan* Manuscript" (PhD diss., New York University, 2011).

9 For a brief historical background of the *Chandāyan*, see Sonya Rhie Mace, "The Chandayana and Early Mughal Painting," in *Themes, Histories, Interpretations: Essays in Honour of B.N. Goswamy*, ed. Padma Kaimal (Ahmedabad: Published by Mapin Publishers in association with Osianama.com, 2013), 105–24.

local narratives by charging them with Islamic symbolism. In the *Chandāyan*, the figure of the beautiful princess Chanda signifies the divine beloved. The narrative opens with a long ode to the city of Govar, where she was born.[10] Govar is an Edenic paradise. The fruits and gardens of the city remind us of the Quranic fruits of paradise as reflected in the bounty of South Asia. Similarly, the Quranic vision of paradise populated with the *muqarrabūn* (those people whom God brings near to Himself, often understood within Sufi thought as the saints) is reimagined as the *but khāna*, or temple complex. The section of the narrative titled "The Description of the Temple Complex Next to the Tank, and the Resident Men and Women *Jōgīs*" is simultaneously a symbolic representation of the perfect Sufi lodge (*khānqāh*) as well as the ideal Edenic human condition. The *jōgī* and his *āshram*—replete with a central pool, singing birds, and fruits from all seasons—at once signify the ideal community, the archetypal human being, and the paradisiacal inner state.

Textual analysis shows how these Sufi authors writing for a Muslim audience adopted Indic motifs and endowed them with Sufi symbolism. The process of negotiation between Indic and Persianate patterns of thought, which were used for the localization of Islamic religious expression, is apparent not only in the language and literary structure of romances like the *Chandāyan*, but also in the visual format of their accompanying illustrations. Starting around the tenth century, before the introduction of paper, the earliest surviving examples of Indian illustrations were made on unbound, horizontal strips of palm-leaf. Even after the Muslims introduced paper around the twelfth century, this convention continued, as seen in illustrations of Jain and Buddhist sacred literature (Fig. 20). The format remained horizontal. With the introduction of the Islamic codex, which is the bound, vertical manuscript, local artists modified their compositions to fit into the newly emerging format. They stacked horizontal registers on top of each other to fit into the vertical design of the page. Composing an image through horizontal registers is a key Indic visual element that persisted throughout the development of Hindustani painting, even after the introduction of Persianate and European pictorial conventions.[11] Early Hindustani painting was also characterized by the distinctive Indic palette

10 The dispersed texts and fragments of the *Chandāyan* were collated and translated into Urdu by Muhammad Ansarullah. For the description of the city of Govar, see Muhammad Ansarullah, *Chandayan* (Patna: Idārā-i Taḥqīqāt-i Urdu, 1996), 52–62.

11 For a detailed art historical analysis on different South Asian page formats, see Daniel J. Ehnbom, "Ways of Seeing in Indian Painting: The Importance of Format," in *2006 Annual Arts Journal* (New Delhi: Visual Arts Gallery, Habitat Centre, 2006), 6–13.

FIGURE 20 The interpretation of dreams, ca. 1480, from a *Kalpasutra* manuscript. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 11.7 × 29.5 cm. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA: bequest of Mrs. Horace W. Frost (91.15.12)

and graphic sensibility: highly saturated pigments were applied in flat, broad washes contained within a wiry, black outline.[12]

Figure 21, an illustration from a *Chandāyan* manuscript divided between the collections of the Lahore Museum and the Government Museum, Chandigarh (therefore known as the Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan*), is an excellent early example of the use of stacked registers and bright, flat colors. Moreover, it depicts the very chapter discussed above, describing the temple complex. In the folio, done in one of the characteristic styles of Hindustani painting from the first half of the sixteenth century, the figure of the poet-saint Mulla Da'ud is shown narrating his own tale to a disciple or courtier in a chamber with a red background, with black prayer beads hanging from his right arm. The jutting trefoil-arched building, in which the two figures sit around an open book, is inserted into the right corner of the bottom register and connects the two main sections of the page. The composition of the entire page is a balance between red and blue. In the center of the top register, we see a courtyard with a temple and tank. A double-storied monastery with meditation chambers surrounds the courtyard. On the second floor of the building, *jōginīs* chant mantras with prayer beads. The bottom register is a flat expanse of blue punctuated by three

12 There are several studies that discuss early styles of Hindustani painting in detail. Some important studies include Ziya' al-Din Nakshabi and Pramod Chandra, *Ṭūṭī-nāma = Tales of a Parrot: Complete Colour Facsimile Edition in Original Size of the Manuscript in Possession of the Cleveland Museum of Art / Das Papageienbuch: vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat der Handschrift aus dem Besitz des Cleveland Museum of Art* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1976), 31–48, 161–64; Jeremiah Losty, "Indian Painting from 1500–1575," in *Masters of Indian Painting*, ed. M.C. Beach, E. Fischer, and B.N. Goswamy (Zurich: Artibus Asiae, 2011), 67–76; and Mace, "The *Chandayana*."

FIGURE 21 The temple complex, ca. 1500–1550, Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan*. Ink and opaque watercolor on paper
COURTESY: GOVERNMENT MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, CHANDIGARH (K-7-30-H)

FIGURE 22 The temple complex (detail), ca. 1500–1550, Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan*. Ink and opaque watercolor on paper
COURTESY: GOVERNMENT MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, CHANDIGARH (K-7-30-H)

distinct types of *jōgīs*: lean, ash-smeared ascetics, those wearing the patched garb more commonly associated with wandering Sufis, and naked *jōgīs* with loincloths (Fig. 22). Without corresponding to them exactly, the *jōgīs* stand in for the three types mentioned in the text—the *khūna*, *tapassī*, and *bhagwant jōgīs*.[13] More importantly, the image provides a vignette into an early modern Saiva *āshram*. Thus, while performing a literal illustrative function, the folio also offers a relatable context for a contemporary sixteenth-century audience. The large earrings—which after the eighteenth century gave the Nath *jōgīs* the

13 Ansarullah, *Chandāyan*, 53. I have not been able to find any information on the *Khūna* yogis. The *tapassī* are those who perform acts of extreme asceticism and self-mortification. *Bhagwant* could refer to followers of a *saguṇa* god (personal deity), such as the majority of Vaiṣnava devotees of Rama and Krishna.

pejorative epithet *kānphaṭā*, or split-eared—and the small black deer horns on threads, known as *siṅgīs*, around the necks of all the holy men suggest that they are followers of Goraksa, or Gorakhnath, a figure shrouded in legend. He is believed to be an eleventh-century Saiva master yogi commonly regarded as the founder of the Nath yogis, an order well-known for its focus on the spiritual discipline of Hatha Yoga.[14]

Nath yogis were similar to several other communities of Indic mystics in that they believed in a formless, unconditioned (or in Sanskrit, *nirguṇa*) Godhead. Many Sufis entering the subcontinent from western Islamic lands saw this as synonymous with the Islamic conception of an absolute (or in Arabic, *muṭlaq*) God. For this reason, Sufis in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries readily mingled with *jōgīs*, sharing practices and ideas freely. As James Mallinson has explained, "This theological openness—which manifested in, among other things, a disdain for the purity laws adhered to by more orthodox Hindu ascetics—allowed them to mix freely with those such as the Muslim(s)."[15]

In the Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan* folio, the garb shared by both Sufis and *jōgīs* includes the patched cloak, the *muraqqaʿ* or *khirqa*. Additional items include the animal skin rug on which the naked figure on the top left of the lower register sits while blowing a long horn, as well as iron bangles and large earrings. Curiously, a companion dog is also present. In fact, but for his *siṅgī* necklace and topknot, the figure with the large white dog entering the page at the bottom of the lower register, followed by two younger *jōgīs*, could easily be mistaken for a dervish, with his long wispy beard, bangles, and bulky patched cloak. By the late-medieval period, yogic and Sufi expressions of asceticism had grown so enmeshed that it became increasingly difficult to separate their identities. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that visiting Europeans would often confuse the two. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, traveling in the seventeenth century, saw armed yogis and identified them as "dervishes."[16]

14 "In the Panjab, in the Himālayas, in Bombay, and elsewhere they [Gorakhnāthīs] are called *Nāth*, which is a general term meaning 'master.'" See George Weston Briggs, *Gorakhnat and the Kanphata Yogis* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1980), 1.

15 James Mallinson, "Yogic Identities: Tradition and Transformation," Essays, Freer Gallery of Art, accessed January 13, 2023, https://www.freersackler.si.edu/essays/yogic-identities-tradition-and-transformation/#footnote24. Mallinson also points out that the Persianate term "jōgī" could be used to refer to ascetics from a variety of traditions, but usually designated Nath yogis.

16 William Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 68 and n19. This confusion between the two denominations of ascetics continued into the colonial period and has also led to many misidentifications in museum collections.

With these characteristics in common, the *jōgīs* shown congregating in the *āshram* are interchangeable with Muslim holy men. They are participants in a shared Indic devotional world inhabited by Naths, Vaisnava *sants*, and Sufis, who all shared a common notion of divinity: namely, a *nirguṇa* or *muṭlaq* deity. *Prema-kahānīs* such as the *Chandāyan* and their corresponding images remind us that the rigid sectarian boundaries of today were inconceivable in pre-colonial India.

How exactly does the yogi function as surrogate for the Sufi? Having established the conceptual and literal interchangeability between the two, we can now examine the yogi's unique role in Sufi romances. As in the story of Radha and Krishna, in most Indic tales the soul is identified as a young woman while the divine takes the form of an idealized man. In Arabic and Persian literary traditions, those roles are usually reversed, as seen in the story of Layla and Majnun.[17] In the South Asian medieval Sufi romances, the Perso-Arabic convention of gendering is continued. While in Indic romances it is often the *sakhī*, the intimate female confidant, who acts as the guide or bridge carrying messages between the divine lovers, in the *Chandāyan* a *jōgī* named Bājir plays the mediator between the heavenly beloved and the earthly seeker.[18]

As the story goes, Bājir providentially catches a glimpse of Chanda while wandering door to door asking for alms and singing songs of separation. The *jōgī* in the street sees her just as she opens her balcony window, poking her head out. Upon seeing her, "it was as if he found a new life," and he falls unconscious.[19] The scene is a symbolic enactment of the yogic moment of *mokśa*, or liberation from the ego, and the Sufi concept of *fanā*, spiritual extinction, most famously depicted in the Quranic anecdote of Moses's encounter with God.[20] It is the moment when, in Sufism, the spiritual traveler finds "a new life" as an intimate friend of God, a *valī*. Not only does the *jōgī* Bājir stand in for the *valī*, he also represents the ideal ascetic who holds the key to the mystery of God-knowledge, *'irfān*.

17 Most famously composed as an epic poem by the twelfth-century poet Nizami Ganjavi. See Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness, and Mystic Longing in Niẓāmī's Epic Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

18 Qamar Adamjee considers Bājir to be a wandering minstrel. See Adamjee, "Strategies for Visual Narration," 178. Ansarullah translates the word *bājir* as *jōgī*, and explains that *bājirs* were a type of yogis. See Ansarullah, *Chandāyan*, 80n1.

19 Ansarullah, *Chandāyan*, 80.

20 "And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless. And when he woke he said: Glory unto Thee!" Quran 7:143.

FIGURE 23
Description of Chanda's beauty, ca. 1500–1550, Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan*. Ink and opaque watercolor on paper
COURTESY: GOVERNMENT MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, CHANDIGARH (K-7-30-I)

After the encounter, Bājir arrives at the neighboring kingdom where its ruler, Rupchand, hears his love songs describing Chanda's beauty. Following the traditional literary conventions of the *sarāpā*—the Persianate head-to-toe description of the beloved, also known as the *nakh-sikh* in Sanskrit—verses praising Chanda's beauty were regularly illustrated in regional workshops during the first half of the sixteenth century.

In a Lahore-Chandigarh folio (Fig. 23), the *jōgī* can be seen sitting cross-legged on a leopard skin opposite the enthroned Rupchand. He is shown in the typical gesture of narrating with his right hand, which is resting on a meditation crutch (Fig. 24). Similar to the Nath *jōgīs* from the temple complex, he has a *siṅgī* necklace, a topknot, and large white earrings.[21] In a page from the

21 For another discussion of this and related folios from the *Chandāyan*, see Qamar Adamjee, "Artistic Agency in Painted Narratives: The Case of the *Chandayan* Manuscripts," in *A Magic World: New Visions of Indian Painting*, ed. Molly Aitken (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2016), 116–29.

FIGURE 24 Description of Chanda's beauty (detail), ca. 1500–1550, Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan*. Ink and opaque watercolor on paper
COURTESY: GOVERNMENT MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, CHANDIGARH (K-7-30-I)

Mumbai *Chandāyan*, another sixteenth-century manuscript depicting the same story, the orange-skinned ascetic is once again shown seated on a leopard skin narrating the heroine's beauty to a swooning Rupchand (Fig. 25).

After hearing Bājir's description of her, the king falls in love with Chanda, and vows to attack Govar and capture the beauty for himself. The famous warrior Lorak is chosen for the task. Needless to say, as soon as Lorak sees Chanda for himself, he falls in love with her as well, and they elope, escaping the city of Govar—where the beauty has been married against her will to a lame, impotent older man—as well as the desirous clutches of Rupchand. Hence begins the story of Lorak and Chanda.

The widespread popularity of Sufi romances and their supporting illustrations in North India attest to how deeply integrated the figure of the yogi had become by the sixteenth century. The theme was continually popular well into

FIGURE 25
Description of Chanda's beauty, ca. 1500–1550, Mumbai *Chandāyan*. Ink and opaque watercolor on paper. CSMVS, Mumbai (57.1/4)
COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ VASTU SANGRAHALAYA. NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES

the seventeenth century. The yogi-Sufi nexus played such an important role in the formation of a uniquely South Asian manifestation of Islamic literary and visual culture that its transmission contributed to patterns of thought that greatly influenced elites. For example, Sufi romances transmitted moral and religious ideals to princes and princesses, such as Prince Salim (the future emperor Jahangir) and his progeny.

1.2 *Mṛigāvatī*

The *jōgī* plays an even more central role in another Hindavi *prema-kahānī*, the *Mṛigāvatī*, composed in 1503 by Qutban, a shaikh of the Suhrawardi Sufi order. The story, involving the protagonist Rajkunwar's quest to find his beloved, the shape-shifting doe-woman Mrigavati, is crucial for understanding the visual and literary mapping of the *jōgī* onto the early Mughal cultural consciousness, particularly in the case of Prince Salim.

In 1600, Prince Salim, impatient to succeed his father who had ruled for almost fifty years, rebelled against Akbar and established a rival court in Allahabad. His coterie included some of the best artists of the empire.

Attempting to make his mark as a ruler in his own right, he recreated the intellectual environment that had fostered him at his father's court. Manuscripts were written and collected, and albums were compiled. The image of the yogi was central to the painting and scribal workshops at Allahabad.[22] One reason for the enthusiasm with which the yogi featured in courtly artworks and texts of this period could be the locale itself. Allahabad, originally an ancient town called Prayag, was a sacred gathering place for yogis. It provided the perfect soil for Salim's own attraction to the yogi and yogic teachings, acquired through local tales, legends, and personal encounters, to grow and flower. From the artworks themselves, it appears that his artists found direct inspiration from the hundreds of Hindu ascetics wandering in the streets and along the riverbanks.

It was at Allahabad, in a courtly climate that reinvigorated older topoi with new ways of expressing them, that the Hindavi *prema-kahānī Mṛigāvatī* was translated into Persian and illustrated for Salim in 1603/4. The romance revolves around Rajkunwar's seven-tier quest to find the doe-princess after an initially unfulfilled union in which the princess admonishes him for not understanding the true meaning of *prema-rasa*, the essence of real love. The epic is understood as an allegory for the inner journey in which the traveler-prince, who represents the spiritual seeker, has to dominate his carnal soul, the Quranic *nafs al-ammāra*, through ascetic practices while gaining nearness to God through the Sufi methods of remembrance, known as *ẕikr*.[23] The underlying moral of the story is that union with the beloved is not something that can be demanded or forcefully obtained—something which Rajkunwar foolishly attempts in the first part of the tale—but is instead a state of being that must be arrived at through severe ascetic practices and trust in the remembrance of God. In the book, written primarily for an Indo-Muslim audience familiar with Sufi mores, this spiritual ideal of renunciation is channeled through the path and practices of the yogi. After Mrigavati chastises the prince and flees from his palace, he embarks on his long adventure by first donning the garb of a wandering *jōgī*. As the text elaborates:

22 Several local texts illustrated at Salim's behest were part of the Allahabad collection, including a treatise on Hatha Yoga, titled *Baḥr al-ḥayāt*, and the conversations between Rama and his teacher, known as the *Yogavāsistha*. See Heike Franke, "Akbar's *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in the Chester Beatty Library," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 161, no. 2 (2011): 359–75, and Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:556–64.

23 Behl, Doniger, and Suhravardi, *The Magic Doe*, 12–14.

> The prince took the guise of a *Gorakhpanthī*.
> He donned the sandals, the girdle, and patched cloak.
> His locks became matted. He assumed the discus,
> the yogi's earrings, the necklace for telling his prayers,
> the staff, the begging bowl, and the lionskin.
> He wore the clothes of a yogi, the basil beads,
> took up the armrest and the trident,
> and rubbed his body all over with ashes.
> He blew the horn whistle and went on the path,
> reciting that divinely beautiful one's name as his support.
> He took the ascetic's viol in his hand,
> and applied his mind to the practices of solitude,
> playing its strings all alone at night.
> He was now yoked to asceticism, at play on the road to perfection.[24]

It is only when he meets his guide, a senior wandering *jōgī* who has seen the city of his beloved, that his journey truly begins. Upon meeting him, "he ran to fall at the ascetic's feet. 'Show me that fortunate, blessed path!'"[25] As we shall see below, the act of submission before a spiritual authority is a key literary and historical trope that was regularly enacted by Persian and Indian royalty.

In the illustrations of the Chester Beatty Library manuscript made for Prince Salim, numerous artists who contributed to the paintings have shown Rajkunwar as a Nath *jōgī* in different ways. In folio 23v (Fig. 26) we see him with matted hair and prayer beads around his neck, wearing wooden clogs and the stitched robe shared by Sufis and *jōgīs*.[26] He is also carrying a *vīnā*, the Indian viol, to indicate that he has become a wandering *jōgī* minstrel, singing laments of love and separation. He has just left his father's kingdom—a narrative detail that may have resonated with the rebellious Prince Salim. Rajkunwar wistfully lifts his gaze towards the faraway city of his beloved which lies beyond the winding stream that divides the entire composition into two distinct halves. Having just left his worldly attachments behind he stands on the long and arduous path below the dividing waters. His aspirations lie above, and in the distance. A large *pīpal* tree, the *ficus religiosa*, rises from the center of the folio and breaks through the border of the painting. As it winds its way out of the

24 Behl, Doniger, and Suhravardi, *The Magic Doe*, 81.

25 Behl, Doniger, and Suhravardi, *The Magic Doe*, 84. See also Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:201 and 208 (fig. 2.55).

26 Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:206.

FIGURE 26 Rajkunwar begins his journey, from the *Rājkuṇwar Romance*, ca. 1603–4. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 28.3 × 17.5 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 37.23v)
© THE TRUSTEES OF THE CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY, DUBLIN

picture plane, the sacred tree simultaneously reflects the prince's spiritual aspirations and acts as a vertical marker dividing two of his main goals: on the top left, on a low hill under two towering palms is an ashram, home of the renunciants, and on the top right is the paradisiacal abode of Mrigavati.

The dual aspirations, represented by the two architectural spaces on either side of the tree, point to a crucial difference between the mainstream Sufi *Weltanschauung* and the renunciate perspective of most Saiva *jōgīs*. For the Sufis following the Prophetic model of the "philosopher-king," the central intention of the spiritual path is to balance inward detachment with worldly responsibility. These are the stages of *fanā*, negation of the carnal soul and extinction in the divine—as represented by the ashram—, followed by *baqā*, subsistence in the world through God—as represented by the city. In Sufi epic romances such as the *Mṛigāvatī*, after the prince has united with his beloved in her city of gold, he takes off his yogi garb and eventually returns to assume leadership of his own kingdom. Striking the ideal balance between the spiritual realm and the world is also represented through the protagonist's efforts to care for and placate two wives whom he must convince to live together in harmony. In most romances of this kind, one wife represents the spiritual sphere of the individual and the other the worldly sphere of their life in the community.

In the same image, a series of paired creatures—ducks in a lotus pond, foxes outside their craggy furrow and, most noticeably, deer next to a flowing stream—offer the viewer a foretaste of the eventual union between Rajkunwar and Mrigavati. These visual details enhance the literary narrative's "impulse toward consummation through a series of episodes that delay the satisfaction of desire."[27] This would have been clear to the painting's original audience as the artist relies on familiar painterly conventions that were shared by the larger Persianate world but localized during the Akbar period. The distant city—a motif established in the Akbar atelier—, the paired animals, the stream, and the animated tree of life are all markers that are freely used in illustrating Sufi devotional literature in the medieval and early modern periods across what Shahab Ahmed has described as the "Balkans-to-Bengal-complex."[28]

In Figure 27, for example, which is a slightly earlier Akbar-period painting made by the court artist Mukund illustrating a folio of Nizami Ganjavi's (1141–1209) *Khamsa* [*Quintet*], the tree—in this instance the more Persianate plane tree—occupies exactly the same compositional space as the tree in the

27 Behl, Doniger, and Suhravardi, *The Magic Doe*, 10.

28 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 32.

FIGURE 27
Prince Faridun shoots an arrow at a gazelle, from Nizami's *Khamsa*, by Mukund, 1595. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 31.8 × 19.6 cm. British Library, London
© THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD, OR.12208, FOL. 19R

Rajkunwar folio.[29] In Persianate literature and painting, the tree is a visual marker that symbolizes the world-axis or tree of life. The paired animals gathering around the tree, the flowing stream—which refers to the fountain of life—, and the city disappearing into the distance are all shared symbols that move freely across geographies and narratives, transporting any given image into an ontological space in which time stands still. They are thus evidence of a shared Muslim cultural imagination in the medieval and early modern periods.[30]

The painting immediately following folio 23v shows the first place that the *jōgī* prince passes through on his journey. In that kingdom the ruler is so moved by his song that he attempts to persuade him to stay, offering him wealth and

29 For a discussion focusing on the manuscript's illustrations, see Barbara Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Niẓāmī* (London: British Library, 1995).

30 "Traditional Islamic culture no more intended to separate its 'secular' and 'religious' domains than did the other great sacral civilizations of the past [...] where every painted or graven image was made to carry a telling allusion to this or that given aspect of holy order of being" (Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam*, 134).

a beautiful wife (Fig. 28). In this painting the semi-naked *jōgī* prince is shown in a typically Indic iconographic convention: seated under the shade of a tall, slender tree, on a naturally raised platform, next to a large lotus tank.[31] Deep in discussion with the coaxing king, he wears a leopard skin draped over his right shoulder. The skin's use as attire is common to both Sufis and yogis.

In Figure 29, Emperor Akbar's chief court artist ʿAbd al-Samad depicts a typical wandering mendicant approaching the young king.[32] The dervish, who carries a horn similar to those of the *jōgīs* from the *Chandāyan* folio and wears comparable earrings and bangles, also has a leopard skin clasped around him like a cape. Paintings such as these echo one another because they accurately portray the garb and everyday practices of ascetics in medieval and early modern South Asia, Central Asia, and Persia. Seventeenth-century images of one of Dara Shikoh's spiritual guides, Shah Dilruba of the Qadiri Sufi order, always show him wearing a leopard-skin cap and tunic (Fig. 18).[33] Just as sitting on an animal-skin rug signifies the ascetic's ability to dominate the carnal soul, the leopard attire also suggests that the ascetic has imbibed the qualities of the animal as a sign of intimacy with God.[34]

The aforementioned scene of Rajkunwar in conversation with the neighboring king (Fig. 28) offers insight into another important Indo-Persian narrative convention connected to the representation of *jōgīs*: depictions of the contrasting spheres of the ascetic and the imperial retinue. In the background of the Rajkunwar painting, the king's palace is once again shown separated from the foreground by water, in this instance a surrounding moat with a bridge. In the farthest distance we see a high hilltop capped with a shrine or temple, alluding to the ultimate, and as yet unfulfilled, goal of the *jōgī* prince. In the middle foreground the *jōgī* and king converse, cordoned off by the imperial retinue. Although recurrently featured in Persian and Mughal paintings of royalty, scholars have tended to neglect the symbolic significance of this retinue. Michael Barry, drawing extensively from literary parallels, has convincingly argued for a deeper reading of the king's entourage, which frequently includes courtiers, banner bearers, and royal horses.[35] Citing a treatise by Ibn Tufayl, a twelfth-century philosopher and follower of Ibn Sina whose writings helped to

31 Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:201, 207, fig. 2.54.

32 For another discussion of this painting, see Sheila R. Canby, *Princes, Poets and Paladins: Islamic and Indian Painting from the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan* (London: British Museum, 1998), 110–11.

33 Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:442–445, fig. 3.56.

34 One of the most popular epithets of ʿAli, the prince of saints, is *asad al-Lah*, "the lion of God."

35 Barry, *Figurative Art in Islam*, 300.

FIGURE 28 Rajkunwar with a king, *Rājkuṇwar Romance*, attributed to Haribans, ca. 1603–4. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 28.3 × 17.5 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 37.25r)

FIGURE 29 Akbar and a Dervish, signed by ʾAbd al-Samad, India, ca. 1586–87. Opaque watercolor, ink, and silver on paper. 39.1 cm × 25.4 cm
© THE AGA KHAN MUSEUM, AKM141

FIGURE 30 Alexander and the Hermit, from Nizami's *Iskandarnāma*, 1494/95, by Behzad. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 24.3 × 17 cm. British Library, London
© THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD, OR.6810, FOL. 273R

disseminate his cosmology across the Islamic world, Barry demonstrates how the horse symbolizes the prince's or king's physical body, which needs to be tethered or reined in through domination by higher reasoning.[36] The courtiers holding the king's weapons represent other faculties such as wrath, lust, and extravagance, which run amok when unbridled but can be rewarding when controlled. As Ibn Tufayl explains, "since until such exile [life on earth], you shall never be quit of them, you must curb them under your grip and overrule them with your authority."[37] The king's retinue in the foreground and his palace in the background therefore represent the corporeal realm, whereas Rajkunwar—as the renunciate *jōgī* seated under a sacred tree on a raised platform—defines the otherworldly precinct of the spirit.

One of the great genre-defining paintings from Herat (Fig. 30), made in 1494/5 by Kamal al-Din Behzad (ca. 1450–1535), the legendary master of the late Timurid and early Safavid courts of Persia, illustrates an anecdote from Nizami's twelfth-century *Iskandarnāma* [*Story of Alexander*], which is a part of his famous *Khamsa*. In the British Library manuscript folio, the kingly figure of Alexander, shown in a green tunic kneeling before a gnostic, is based, like so many early modern illustrations of devotional epics, on the patron himself: in this instance the Timurid ruler, Sultan Husain Mirza Bayqara (1438–1506). The holy man, described by Nizami as an Indian ascetic living near the Indus River, sits before a cave in the wilderness of the mountains. Alexander has come to petition the ascetic's prayer for success as he prepares to attack the city shown in the background of the painting, bedecked with web-like brickwork and soldiers scurrying visibly on its ramparts. The sage is shaded by the familiar autumnal plane tree from which a stream—representing the fountain of life—can be seen flowing downward toward a guard holding a lantern. In Quranic terms, the fountain or stream refers to the place where Moses met al-Khizr, the evergreen prophet who leads souls to the waters of immortality. The fountain of life also refers to the place where the sweet sea of the afterlife meets the salt sea of this world, and is thus known as "the meeting place of the two oceans," the *majma' al-baḥrayn*.[38] Similarly, the threshold of the cave symbolizes the liminal space here occupied by the saint.[39] The cave itself

36 The treatise is *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzan*, which Barry mistakenly quotes as a work by Avicenna.

37 Barry, *Figurative Art in Islam*, 301. Also see Ibn Tufayl, *Ibn Tufayl's* Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: *A Philosophical Tale*, trans. Lenn Goodman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

38 Quran 18:60–82.

39 Every realized saint in Islam is thought to have an aspect of al-Khizr, since sanctity is synonymous with immortality: the only means of attaining union with God is through extinguishing the lower self. True knowledge of God is beyond time and space, and thus through the very act of participating in God-knowledge the saint becomes ever-living.

simultaneously recalls the place where the Prophet Muhammad went for his spiritual retreats and received the first Quranic revelation, as well as the *ghayb*, the Unknown or Beyond-Being womb chamber where the lower soul and body are left behind and the secret of God's hidden mystery is revealed to the mystic. The practice of making spiritual retreats in caves is another phenomenon found across the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and South Asia.[40] This folio, made by *the* archetypal painter, Behzad, contains several key symbols that help us understand the symbolic framework of paintings that function at once as illustrations for particular narratives and as pedagogical devices animated with religious meaning.

In Behzad's reimagining of the literary and historical theme of rulers visiting ascetics in the wilderness, the king's corporeal faculties are not only held in check but are depicted literally behind him: the horse is shown reined in by the groom holding the bridle; the archer, who looks away from the saint, has his arrows safely in the quiver; and the king's sword is sheathed in the page's hand. None of the retinue, including the king's own horse, are allowed to enter the hallowed vicinity of the saint's cave. The message of the painting is that the emperor must leave behind his worldly emblems of power in order to humble himself before a spiritual authority.

A similar attitude is repeated in the *Mṛigāvatī* anecdote illustrated in the folio in Figure 28. Even though these symbols are unrelated to the textual narrative of the particular passage in which the uninitiated prince does not yet embody the perfected human being, *al-insān al-kāmil* of the Sufis, and the king shown in the image only appears briefly, primarily to introduce Rajkunwar to his *jōgī*-guide, it is nonetheless important to point them out in order to reveal the repeated use of devotional symbols that were deeply rooted in the Indo-Persian cultural imagination. The insertion of these narrative devices helped inculcate princely ideals in the very princes who commissioned these luxurious manuscripts.

It was thus that romances primarily written by Sufis for spiritual instruction also acted as morality tales, educating young patrons in courtly comportment and etiquette, while at the same time instilling a sense of religious hierarchy in which the gnostic of God (the *'ārif bi'Llah*)—owing to his spiritual independence from social hierarchies—was believed to hold the highest status. Nizami uses the same theme in his *Khamsa* by placing the dervish-like Majnun, Layla's

40 For a detailed analysis of the symbolism of the cave and its use in Persian painting, see Barry, "Alexander's Cave," in *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam*, 253–384. The use of the cave symbolism also coincides with its use in Neo-Platonism, whose language was readily accepted and incorporated into medieval Islamic philosophy and Sufism.

lover, in a cave where he lives with wild beasts. Majnun's uncle, upon seeing his spiritual state in the cave, remembers a tale about a dervish who was visited by a king in the Arabian Desert. At seeing the dervish, the king said, "'The dervish is a wise man, and he is superior even to me. He knows well the worth of what he has and is satisfied.' Then the king went into the hut and kissed the dervish's feet."[41]

In the *Mṛigāvatī*, Rajkunwar completes several quests in the garb of a yogi, from escaping man-eating serpents to defeating an Odyssey-inspired cyclops, before finally arriving at his beloved's city. It is only when he meets Mrigavati that he removes his yogic attire and reveals his true identity. Symbolically, the story of Rajkunwar-the-yogi is an allegory for the Sufi path of *fanā*, and ends with his union with Mrigavati. The remainder of the epic romance in which Rajkunwar assumes his role as prince unfolds as an allegory for *baqā*, the Sufi concept of subsistence in the world through God. Rajkunwar returns home with his two wives to rule over his realm as king. In these *prema-kahānīs*, the ideals of the perfect yogi and the perfect prince converge in the role of the monarch.

2 Yogis in Princely Albums

Before entering a lengthy discussion on the yogi and his function in Mughal albums, it is important to briefly outline the visual transmission of the yogi figure from Emperor Akbar to Prince Salim.

2.1 *Yogis from Akbar to Jahangir*

It is clear from the *Bāburnāma*, the autobiography of the first Mughal emperor, Babur (1483–1530), that the Mughals from the very beginning of their presence in India were interested in interacting with *jōgīs*. Although Babur himself was disappointed by his visit to Gurkhattri, a Nath *maṭh* (cloister or monastery) near Peshawar, Akbar-period illustrations of the text reimagine the royal visit as populated with *jōgīs*, thereby reflecting Akbar's own enthusiasm for Indic knowledge (Fig. 31).[42] Babur only managed to rule over his newly conquered territory for four years. As he states in his autobiography, he saw himself as a

41 Peter J. Chekowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the* Khamseh of *Nizami* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 63. The *naṣīḥatnāme* (advice to princes) tradition in epic as well as romantic texts was also extremely popular in the Ottoman world, which was very much part of the Balkans-to-Bengal complex.

42 Diamond and Aitken, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, 180–81, 184: fig. 14d. For introductory surveys on yogis in Mughal painting, see Walter Smith, "Hindu Ascetics in Mughal

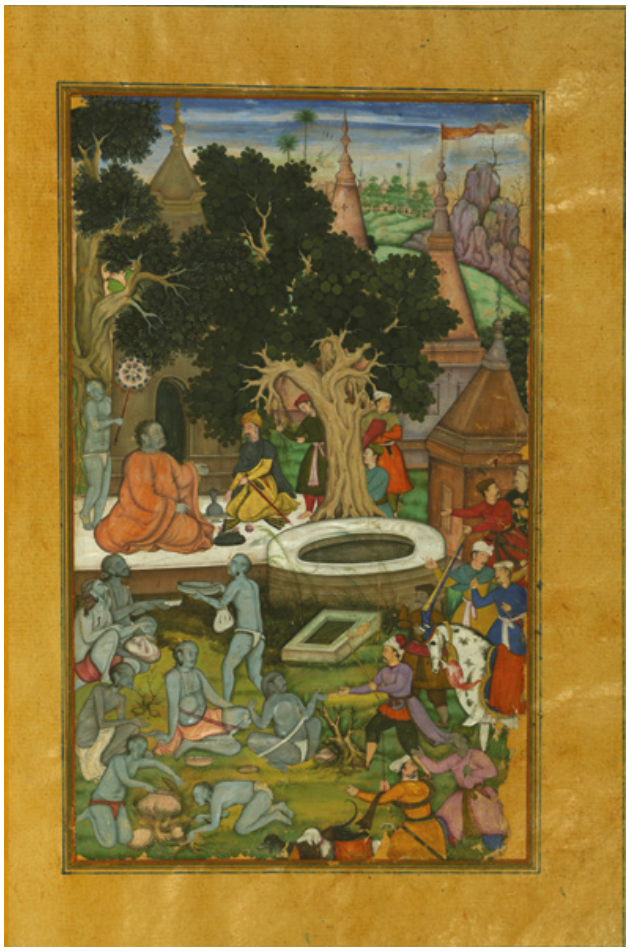

FIGURE 31
Babur visiting Gurkhattri, from the *Bāburnāma*, ca. 1590. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 32 × 21 cm. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (W.596.22B)

foreigner in an unpleasant land. By contrast, his grandson Akbar (r. 1550–1605), who consolidated and expanded the empire, did not see himself as an outsider, but as completely Hindustani. Akbar's architectural projects, such as the vast royal complex at Fatehpur Sikri, demonstrate how he consciously utilized earlier Indo-Muslim models in an attempt to align himself with Sultanate-period rulers. These included elements such as screen carvings and finials that were also found in Hindu temples and local urban dwellings (Fig. 32). The cultural overlapping apparent in the architecture from this period parallels the shared garb of South Asian ascetics.

Scholars of art history often assume that Akbar was the first Muslim ruler in India to show enthusiasm for the representation of yogis.[43] However, as we have seen from the *Chandāyan*, which was written at the court of a local Muslim ruler and copied and illustrated for other regional courts, there was already

Painting under Akbar," *Oriental Art* 27 (1981): 67–75, and Rachel Parikh, "Yoga under the Mughals: From Practice to Paintings," *South Asian Studies* 31, no. 2 (2015): 215–36.

43 See for example Smith, "Hindu Ascetics in Mughal Painting," 67.

FIGURE 32 Fatehpur Sikri, 1572–1585
PHOTO COURTESY ARCHNET (IAA15438)

a vibrant visual precedent established before the Mughal period. Akbar did, however, revolutionize the way yogis were integrated into his empire.[44] This is also reflected in the artworks made under his patronage. In a *Hamzanāma* folio (Fig. 33), illustrated for the young Emperor Akbar sometime between 1562 and 1577, a spy is shown sitting in his den on the top left dressed in the garb of a yogi, with matted locks, tiger-skin thrown over one shoulder, and a large horn slung over his back.[45] When compared to the illustrations from the earlier *Chandāyan* manuscripts, we notice how, despite the iconographic similarity, a major stylistic shift has taken place: in the Akbar period there is an attention to individualistic detail, each figure coursing with movement and energy. It is this Indo-Muslim legacy, transfigured under the Mughals, that Akbar's son Salim continued through his own patronage.[46]

44 Akbar gave several yogi groups, particularly those belonging to the Nath sect, land grants. He would also go to their holy places and meet senior ascetics personally, receiving blessings from them and awarding them gifts in return. See William Pinch, "Nāth Yogīs, Akbar, and the 'Bālnāth Ṭillā,'" in *Yoga in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 273–88.

45 For a catalogue entry and image, see John Seyller, *The Adventures of Hamza: Painting and Storytelling in Mughal India* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 2002), 168.

46 For a slightly earlier Akbar period example of a yogi in an illustrated manuscript, see the folio from the *Ṭūṭīnāma*, forty-sixth night: the Raja of Ujjain, who is traveling in the guise of a yogi, meets two brothers who ask him to equitably partition their father's possessions, ca. 1560, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (1962.279.293.b).

FIGURE 33
Misbah the Grocer brings the spy Parran to his house, from the *Hamzanāma*, ca. 1570, attributed to Dasavanta. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on cloth; mounted on paper. 70.8 × 54.9 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (24.48.1). Rogers Fund, 1924 OPEN ACCESS, CREATIVE COMMONS ZERO (CC0)

2.2 *Yogis in Salim/Jahangir Period Albums*

The recurrence of the highly developed visual language of Muslim devotion made for nobility, dealing with a wide variety of themes, helped bring even the most secular images into a sacred orbit, including historical scenes and representations of courtly life. Historical events transmitted enduring conventions on the illustrated page, which became transfigured by these emblems into an ontological space. The artist Govardhan's painting of *Jahangir Visiting Jadrup* (ca. 1620), made for an album during the latter half of Emperor Jahangir's reign, is an historical reflection of precisely this atemporal convention in which a worldly king submits, almost ritually, to a king of the spiritual realm (Fig. 34).[47]

47 See Amina Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 39–40, fig. 40. For a slightly earlier Jahangir period example of a prince visiting a saint, see the border decoration from Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS 117, *Berlin Album* (ca. 1610), f. 22a, in which Prince Salim pays a visit to Shaikh Salim, the saint who famously prayed for Akbar to have a male heir.

FIGURE 34 The visit of the emperor Jahangir to the ascetic Jadrûp, by Govardhan, ca. 1620. Page from the *Saint-Petersburg Album*. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 35.4 × 22 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (OA7171)
© RMN-GRAND PALAIS / ART RESOURCE, NY. PHOTO: MATHIEU RABEAU

It echoes an *Akbarnāma* painting made for Emperor Akbar around 1587, in which the king is shown as a young prince visiting the famed yogi Baba Bilas of Ghazni (Fig. 35).[48] In the *Akbarnāma* (completed in 1594), the court historian Abu'l Fazl describes how on one visit, the ascetic predicted Akbar's future greatness. For this reason, the anecdote and its corresponding painting were included in the official chronicle of the emperor's life. Following this historical, literary, and visual precedent, the artist Govardhan, in his painting depicting Jahangir visiting Jadrup, carefully divides his depiction of an actual event into two registers. In this case the spatial division is more definite. The world below bears the insignia of worldly power: the golden parasol, the enormous fan, the reined-in horse and the matchlock resting on the shoulder of a courtier. Meanwhile, above it all, Jahangir sits facing the great Vedantin saint Jadrup in his cave-like hovel. The diffusion of golden light that we see in the atmosphere of the painting is one of the signature elements of Govardhan's style. Above the dark green hedge that divides the two registers, this ethereal light seems somehow distinct from the implied cacophony of the lower world. As is common in nearly all representations of saints in Hindustani painting, the two figures converse sitting on a raised platform near a tree. The distractions of urban life fade into the distance, as symbolized by the Renaissance-style town receding into the background. Govardhan ingeniously uses the Indic painterly convention of stacking horizontal registers on top of each other to create a symbolic space.

Vedantins such as Jadrup are yogis who adhere strictly to the Vedas and believe in a non-formal absolute godhead Brahma.[49] Like the many South Asian Sufis who saw similarities between a *nirguṇa* God and a *muṭlaq* God, Jahangir had no problems viewing the Vedantin *sadhu* as a dervish. Just as late medieval Sufi authors such as Mulla Da'ud and Qutban repurposed earlier Indian folk tales for a distinctly Islamic function, Emperor Jahangir—the princely patron of the *Mṛigāvatī* epic—situated his meeting with Jadrup within an Islamic fold. In his memoirs, he describes his first meeting with the Vedantin saint thus:

> The place he had chosen for his abode was a pit dug out in the middle of a hill. The entrance was *shaped like a mihrab* [the mosque prayer niche] [...] He had neither mat nor straw strewn underfoot as *other dervishes do* [...] although he is absolutely naked and has no clothing except a piece of rag with which he covers himself in front and behind, he never lights

48 Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1: 131–133, fig. 1.228.

49 Jahangir describes Jadrup as a "Vedantin," from Ujjain. The contemporaneous *Dabistān-i-mazāhib* describes him as a follower of the great Advaita Vedantin saint Shankarachariya.

FIGURE 35 Akbar visits Baba Bilas, by La'l, from the *Akbarnāma*, ca. 1587. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 28.9 × 17.2 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 11A.26)

> a fire. *As Mulla Rumi says, speaking in the idiom of dervishes*: "Our clothing is the heat of the sun by day, and moonlight is our pillow and quilt by night" [...] He is not devoid of learning and has studied well the science of the Vedanta, *which is the science of Sufism*.[50]

It is crucial not to interpret these interactions as evidence of Hindu-Muslim syncretism, as many scholars have suggested. Nor should we reduce them solely to the field of politics, as we understand it in the twenty-first century, where such images are studied—sadly, far too often—only as examples of rulers attempting to self-fashion their political identities. Imagining such interactions as "syncretic" fails to acknowledge the agency of a given patron, artist, or culture. It tends to blur the lines between distinct belief systems, rather than recognizing the specific negotiations that take place during cultural engagements. Likewise, seeing these engagements merely as a means of seeking political power is flatly simplistic. Furthermore, this point of view diminishes or denies the very beliefs that the culture under study considered as its bedrock. The reductive use of this lens imposes contemporary values and hierarchies onto a society's past, while largely ignoring the local context that shaped its means of expressing itself. We need to acknowledge that the Muslim patrons viewed and internalized such encounters through a clearly Islamic and *Islamizing* lens.[51] These are the very sentiments, deeply rooted in the larger Mughal elite culture, that were to influence Prince Dara Shikoh four decades later, propelling him into the serious intellectual endeavor of proving that the "science of the Vedanta" is none other than "the science of Sufism."

It should be clarified that in this chapter, I give one particular example of how an Indic element was used for an Islamic or Sufi purpose: the theme of the yogi. By showing this, I do not intend to downplay the well-known fact that Muslims—in particular, the Mughal rulers—were interested in specific Hindu figures and yogic texts; not just to Islamize them, but also to participate in their Indic-ness. Afterall, the coexistence and multivalence of religious traditions is well embodied by the artists themselves, many of whom were Hindus working for Muslim patrons.

The practice of reconstituting the theme of the *jōgī* for a specifically Islamized devotional scheme is most vividly on display in the now dispersed

50 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans. Wheeler Thackston (New York: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in association with Oxford University Press, 1999), 209; my italics.

51 When using the term "Islamic," I follow Shahab Ahmad's definition, in which Islam is viewed more holistically, not just as "religion" strictly speaking but as a lived culture (Ahmad, *What Is Islam?*, 6).

Salim Album (assembled ca. 1600–05).[52] Apart from standing portraits of individuals from Akbar and Salim-period *darbārs*, the most prominent theme of the album is devotional, including representations of *jōgīs* and dervishes. Pages also include Christian themes of Mary and Jesus, as well as one folio showing a Jesuit priest. These themes were imitated, in a remarkably similar compositional scheme, first by Salim's son Prince Khurram—the future Emperor Shah Jahan—in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and three decades later by the teenage Dara Shikoh in his famous British Library album.[53] Each image is accompanied by Persian verses written in horizontal bands framing the figures on the top, and occasionally below as well.[54] Two striking representations of *jōgīs* in the *Salim Album* and their accompanying texts reveal the Sufic identification with Nath spirituality (Fig. 36 and 37). It has been suggested that the two pages, one in the Harvard Museums and the other in the Chester Beatty Library, would have originally faced each other.[55] The album pages were made for Prince Salim around the same time as the illustrated *Baḥr al-ḥayāt* [*The Ocean of Life*]—a Persian translation of the Sanskrit manual on Hatha yoga—in which there are multiple representations of Saiva *jōgīs*.[56] Curiously, similar to the holy men in the *Baḥr al-ḥayāt*, the *jōgīs* in the *Salim Album* are also shown with dogs.

In Figure 36 from the Harvard Museums, the *jōgī* sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up is wearing the familiar stitched orange robe of *saṇyāsīs* and

52 Dispersed in the early twentieth century, the known folios of the album are all in European and American collections. The largest number of folios are in the Chester Beatty Album. There are around thirty-one pages that have been accounted for. For a detailed discussion on the *Salim Album*, see Wright, "The Salim Album, c. 1600–1605," in Wright and Stronge, *Muraqqa'*, 54–67. Also see Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:300–07, and Yael Rice, "The Emperor's Eye and the Painter's Brush: The Rise of the Mughal Court Artist, c. 1546–1627" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011), 26–46.

53 The Prince Khurram album was tragically dispersed in a Sotheby's auction on June 15, 1959. For a note on the *Khurram Album*, see Wright and Stronge, *Muraqqa'*, Appendix 7, 473.

54 The use of poetry plays a crucial role for identifying the subjects of the paintings in the *Salim Album*. Rice has convincingly shown that there was "a clear division between specific and nonspecific images." Using the example of a painting of Mary, Rice explains that the devotional paintings in the album are supported with more abstract poetic text. These folios do not have a literal correspondence between text and image, but a metaphorical one (Rice, "The Emperor's Eye," 36–37).

55 Sunil Sharma, "The Sati and the Yogi: Safavid and Mughal Imperial Self-Representation in Two Album Pages," in *In Harmony: The Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art*, ed. Mary McWilliams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museums, 2013), 152. Wright has convincingly suggested that, although pages might have been viewed in a certain sequence, they were probably never bound into an album. See Wright, "The Salim Album," 55. Also see Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 1:303, fig. 2.164.

56 Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 11:556–64.

FIGURE 36 A Nath Yogi with Two White Dogs, folio from the *Salim Album*. ca. 1600. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 23.3 × 15 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, the Norma Jean Calderwood Collection of Islamic Art
PHOTO ©PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE, 2002.50.29

FIGURE 37 Yogi, from the *Salim Album*, ca. 1599–1604. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. 19.8 × 12.3 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 44.3)
© THE TRUSTEES OF THE CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY, DUBLIN

wandering dervishes. A few decades later, artists working for Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh painted known Sufi saints close to the two in a similar posture. In an otherwise barren landscape, the mendicant is surrounded by a grassy halo, perhaps hinting at his evergreen inner state. In the further background a blue lake merges with the sky, which is lined with a miniscule flock of birds. His left hand, which holds a short, thin meditation crutch, is resting on his upturned black hat, while his other hand clasps his legs. The *jōgī* with his *siṅgī* necklace and large earrings looks with contentment at the two wild-eyed dogs playing around him. In Figure 37 from the Chester Beatty Library, a sterner looking *jōgī* in a black stitched robe similar to the one worn by Rajkunwar sits framed against the opening to his hovel in the wilderness, with his right hand assertively resting on the dog's head, perhaps even pressing its ear as an admonition.

Ample visual evidence shows that wandering *jōgīs* and dervishes alike kept companion animals. Contemporaneous literary references suggest that in addition to acting as loyal companions for mendicants journeying alone in the wilderness, dogs also served an important symbolic function. The animal is a regularly occurring motif used by all of the great classical Persian poets from Rumi to Amir Khusro. In their poetry, the dog reflects a dual nature that converges in the image of the dyadic human soul. It is both reviled and eulogized. In mainstream Muslim culture, dogs are considered inherently impure, but in the Quran, they are awarded a higher status among animals by virtue of being included in the story of the sleepers.[57] A cursory survey of Rumi's *Mathnavī* reveals the figure of the dog as both loved and hated:

> Thy friends are catching onagers in the desert; thou art catching a blind man in the street; this is bad.
> Thy friends seek onagers by hunting (them); thou in (mere) malice seekest a blind man in the street.
> The knowing dog has made the onager his prey, while this worthless dog has attacked a blind man.
> When the dog has learned the knowledge (imparted to him), he has escaped from error: he hunts lawful prey in the jungles.
> When the dog has become knowing (*ʿálim*), he marches briskly; when the dog has become a knower of God (*ʿárif*), he becomes (as) the Men of the Cave.[58]

57 Quran 18:18.
58 Rumi, *The Mathnawi of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, 1:ll. 2630–34.

As is evident from these lines, the dog represents the volatile human soul, and just like the king's attendants and the horse, needs to be kept in check. It must be tamed if the spiritual traveler is to succeed in attaining the ultimate goal: union with God. Elsewhere Rumi says:

> Know that your only means of hunting is the dog (the animal soul): throw bones to the dog but seldom,
> Because when the dog has eaten its fill, it becomes rebellious: how should it run to the goodly chase and hunt?[59]

Over time the very word "dog" came to be associated with the self-deprecating "self," so much so that poets would often refer to themselves, humbly, as "this dog." This is wonderfully echoed in the four verses framing the central image in Figure 37, in which the impassioned poet/lover calls out proclaiming:

> I am the *jōgī* of love, and am passionate for you,
> With every hair I desire you.
> My shirt is made with the dust of his lane,
> And that too has blood from (my) eyes and is ripped to its hem.
>
> I am one with all the nations,
> I should have a rosary and a girdle.
> Your dog is better than the entire world of fidelity,
> If I am not your dog, the dog is better than me.[60]

59 Rumi, *The Mathnawi of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, 1:ll. 2874–79.

60 Sharma, "The Sati and the Yogi," 153; I have slightly modified Sharma's translation. For an alternate translation by Thackston, see Wright and Stronge, *Muraqqa'*, 270. Thackston has preferred to read *chūkī* rather than the more obvious *jōgī* in the first line of the first couplet. In the traditional *Nasta'līq* script, it is common to drop the extra dots that would otherwise confirm the specific letter. In this case it could be "j" or "ch" depending on the context and meaning. Similarly, it is common to drop the extra dash on top of the "k" stroke, which would otherwise confirm the letter "g." The word *chūkī* means "watchman," and in this context makes less sense than *jōgī*, which is the actual subject of the painting itself. However, we must assume that the calligrapher and the poet originally intended to instill this ambiguity, since double meaning (*ihām*) is a major convention in Persian and Urdu poetry.

They echo the sentiments from another Rumi poem in which he says:

> The Turcoman dogs fawn at the tent-door before the guest,
> But if anyone having the face of a stranger pass by the tent,
> he will see the dogs rushing at him like lions.
> I am not less than a dog in devotion,
> nor is God less than a Turcoman in life (living power).[61]

The poem from the *Salim Album* folio ends with the speaking protagonist of the verse identifying not with the *jōgī* but with the dog. The *jōgī* in the painting acts as the initiator and guide on the path to salvation. This sentiment is repeated in another folio from the *Salim Album*, made by Basawan (Fig. 38), in which we actually witness an aspirant kissing the feet of the guide, who in this case is a Muslim dervish.[62] The wispy, barefooted dervish stands beneath the tree of life with an open book, signifying guidance. On a branch directly above the guide sits a lightly sketched, mischievous monkey mimicking the dervish's posture. The serene dog below has already come under the care of the guide and is shown as superior to the uninitiated devotee making his plea. As if to confirm the desperation of the seeker, the verse above the painting proclaims: "I have fallen at his feet from helplessness, would it be that he would take my hand."

By the mid-seventeenth century the dog-as-self motif was embedded so deeply in the Indo-Muslim cultural consciousness that in a letter written to Shah Dilruba, Dara Shikoh implores the saint by referring to himself as a lowly, wretched dog (Fig. 39):

> I hope that they [Shah Dilruba] do not forget this lowest of dogs of their threshold [Dara Shikoh],
> What worth do I have, since only a dog am I?
> How can I even desire to be among your dogs?[63]

61 Rumi, *The Mathnawi of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, I:ll. 831–34.

62 See Sonya Rhie Mace, Dominique DeLuca, and Mohsen Ashtiany, *Mughal Paintings: Art and Stories: The Cleveland Museum of Art* (London: D. Giles, 2016), 196–97, fig. 4.57, and Howard Hodgkin and Terence McInerney, *Indian Drawing: An Exhibition* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1983), fig. 52.

63 BL, MS Or. 9617, Shikoh, *Fayyāż al-qawānīn*, f. 40.

FIGURE 38 A mendicant bowing before a holy man, from the *Salim Album*, by Basavan, circa 1585; inner border added in Allahabad ca. 1602; outer border added probably 1900s. Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper. 32.7 × 21.1 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, gift in honor of Madeline Neves Clapp; gift of Mrs. Henry White Cannon by exchange; bequest of Louise T. Cooper; Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund; from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection (2013.296)

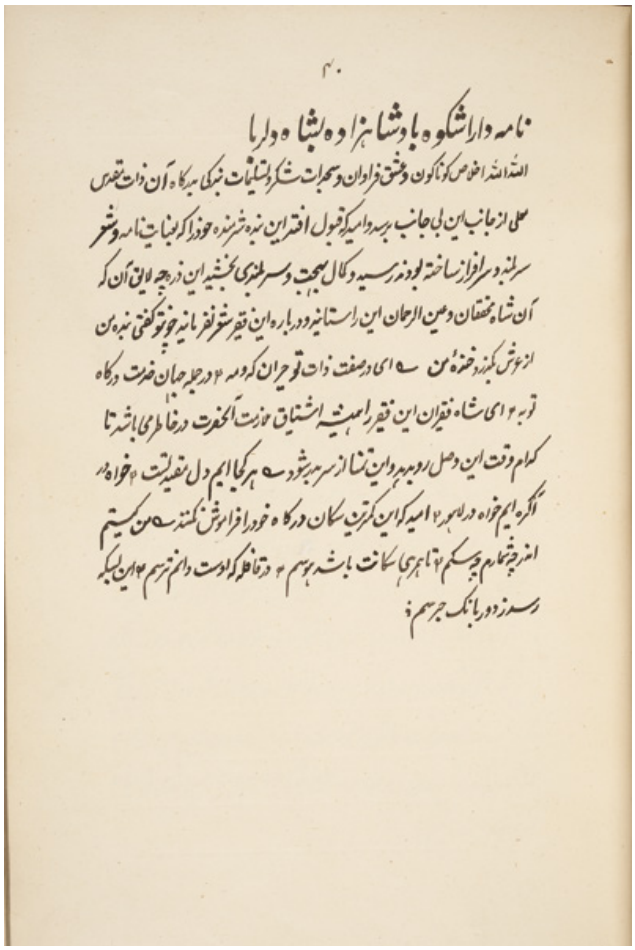

FIGURE 39
A letter from Dara Shikoh to Shah Dilruba, from the *Fayyāż al-qawānīn*. Ink on paper. 31.4 × 18.8 cm. British Library, London
© THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD, OR.9617, F. 40R

The other folio from the *Salim Album*, described earlier (Fig. 36), also shares the dog and *jōgī* theme, but with a slightly different connotation. The verses read:

> Separated from my Beloved, I have become a *jōgī*,
> For that dear one I have become a *jōgī*
>
> My Shah is fond of the *jōgīs*,
> Thus, helpless, I have become a *jōgī*.

When the painting is examined with its associated verses, it mirrors the exact theme of the *Rājkuṇwar Romance*, in which the hero must become a *jōgī* in order to find his beloved and achieve union with God. In this instance the beloved is referred to as the "Shah," which could simultaneously signify a worldly king or God. The happy, tame dogs would then reflect the *jōgī* hero's submitted inner self.

For medieval Sufis and poets entering the subcontinent, it must have been a curious but common sight to see *jōgīs* wandering with their companion dogs. For the uniquely unruly branch of Sufis typically aligned to the Qalandari order "whom we know as antinomian (*bī-shar'*) for their flagrant and deliberate transgression against legal norms," keeping stray dogs was one of many typically subversive acts that they engaged in.[64] Both visual and literary references confirm that wandering dervishes such as Qalandars adopted the practice of the *jōgīs* and kept not only pet dogs, but in some cases rams, wild bears, and even lions.[65]

By the time the *Salim Album* was assembled in the early seventeenth century, the figures of the *jōgī* and the Qalandar had become more or less synonymous. Rizvi suggests that as early as the fourteenth century, *jōgīs* and Qalandars wandered together, from ashram to ashram and *khānqāh* to *khānqāh*.[66] This mingling of two oceans of South Asian mysticism is on display in a painting from the *Rājkuṇwar Romance* (Fig. 40). It shows the prince with attendants distributing bread to mendicants in a courtyard.[67] At first glance all the ascetics appear to be *jōgīs* in their familiar attire. A more careful examination reveals that the figure in the lower left corner wearing a black, half-sleeved robe is in fact a Qalandari Sufi (Fig. 41). The most immediate sign of his affiliation is his right arm marked by a row of burns, a form of ritualistic self-mortification most commonly associated with this particular community. A red leather pouch hanging from his girdle is another object regularly seen with wandering Qalandars. His black, floppy, fur hat also sets him apart from the *jōgīs* in the painting. It is possible that the figure in front of him, in a grey skirt and a large

64 Scott Kugle, *Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 182.

65 For an example of Qalandars with a dog see, Stuart C. Welch et al., *From Mind, Heart, and Hand: Persian, Turkish, and Indian Drawings from the Stuart Cary Welch Collection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 208, fig. 75, and Andrew Topsfield, *In the Realm of Gods and Kings: Arts of India* (London: Philip Wilson, 2004), 198–99, fig. 81. One cannot help but think of the great Persian tragic hero Majnun, who also roamed in the desert with wild animals while yearning for his beloved.

For a young Qalandar with a bear see, Stuart C. Welch et al., *The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 234, 238, ill., verso pl. 75 (b/w); recto pl. 76 (color). For a Qalandar with a lion, see Navina Haidar, "Visual Splendour: Embellished Pages from the Metropolitan Museum's Collection of Islamic and Indian Manuscripts," *Arts of Asia* 42 (2012): 111–12, fig. 8 (color). For an example of Indian ascetics with dogs from the *Gulshan Album*, see Diamond and Aitken, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, 224–25, fig. 19a–b.

66 Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 216.

67 See Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, I205, 214, fig. 2.64 (b/w).

FIGURE 40 The prince distributing bread, from the *Rājkuṇwar Romance*, ca. 1603–4. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 28.3 × 17.5 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 37.44b)

FIGURE 41 The prince distributing bread (detail), from the *Rājkuṇwar Romance*, ca. 1603–4. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 28.3 × 17.5 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 37.44b)

white *chādar*, carrying a clay pot, is also a fellow dervish. He too has a leather pouch peeping out from under his *chādar*.

Another folio from the *Salim Album* shows a Qalandar so similar to the *jōgīs* that he has been mistaken for a Nath (Fig. 42).[68] However, the couplet in the top band of the border, a popular verse of the Persian poet Hafiz, clearly identifies him as a Qalandar. This is further affirmed by the fact that Qalandars are known from various historical and biographical accounts to have shaved their heads as a rite of initiation. The couplet praises the Qalandar thus: "A thousand points finer than a strand of hair are here, / Anyone who shaves his head does not get to know the Qalandar's way."[69] The dervish, with his large earrings, beaded necklaces, and iron bracelets, is blowing a large, curved horn strikingly similar to those of the *jōgīs* from the Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandāyan* folio (Fig. 21). A red leather pouch, a gold-tipped conch, a wooden begging

68 This folio was formerly in the Sven Gahlin collection, but sold in a Sotheby's auction in London on October 6, 2015. For more details see, "A dervish of the Qalandari order with a pet sheep, by Mukund, Mughal, circa 1585–95," The Sven Gahlin Collection, Sotheby's, http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/sven-gahlin-collection-l15224/lot.8.html.

69 Hafiz, *The Complete Ghazals of Hafez*, ed. Muhammad Qazvini and Qasim Ghani (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2018), 177.

FIGURE 42 A Qalandar, from the *Salim Album* by Mukund, ca. 1595, formerly the Sven Gahlin Collection. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 23.3 × 14.9 cm. Sotheby's London, 6 October 2015, lot 8
© PHOTO COURTESY SOTHEBY'S, 2023

FIGURE 43
A Qalandar with a dog (museum title is "Nath yogi and dog"), attributed to Basavan, ca. 1590. Ink, opaque watercolor on paper. 26.2 × 26.6 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, the Stuart Cary Welch Collection, gift of Edith I. Welch in memory of Stuart Cary Welch
PHOTO © PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE, 2009.202.255

bowl, and a slender knife hang from the belt that fastens his tunic. Another short blade is wedged into the belt. A pet ram with a collar of golden bells dutifully accompanies him. A close counterpart to the present drawing, also from the late Akbar period, is a *nīm qalam*, or half-tinted drawing, of a wandering ascetic from the collection of the Harvard Art Museums (Fig. 43). Attributed to Basavan, this figure has also been incorrectly identified as a *kānphaṭā* (Nath *jōgī*).[70] Bearing exactly the same accouterments as the dervish in the *Salim Album* folio, this Qalandar is accompanied by a dog.

Just like *jōgīs*, Qalandars were ubiquitous in the South Asian religious landscape. From visual and hagiographical accounts, it appears that both groups occupied the liminal space between urban, civilized society and the untamed wilderness. Qalandari poet-ascetics such as the fifteenth-century Shah Sharaf Bu ʿAli Qalandar and the sixteenth-century Shah Husain were extremely

70 Welch et al., *From Mind, Heart, and Hand*, 88, fig. 21. Another example of a Qalandar walking with his dog, also by Basavan, is in Paris, Museé Guimet, No. 3619 Gb. See Okada, *Indian Miniatures*, 92.

popular among the masses, transcending sectarian identifications. As wandering mendicants with little or no regard for rigid social hierarchies, they were viewed with awe by the urban Muslim elite. In literature and in painting, Qalandars were similar to yogis in that they functioned as gateways to another world. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, the theme of the Qalandar was taken up far more programmatically by Jahangir's grandson Prince Dara Shikoh, in albums compiled for him. His fascination with this unruly group in his formative years was to leave an indelible mark on his later spiritual formation, as was his attraction to Hindu yogis.

By the time of the *Salim Album*, an image of a yogi or a Qalandar embodied the entire ethos surrounding renunciate culture and what it represented to the South Asian imagination. For elite patrons, this otherworldly ideal was at the same time entangled with princely virtues and nurtured the prince-par-excellence into projecting the persona of the archetypal lover, the archetypal mystic, and the archetypal future king.

2.3 Yogis in the *Dara Shikoh Album*

Following Jahangir's example, Dara Shikoh included images of yogis in an album that he commissioned for his fiancé, Nadira Banu Begum, in the mid-1630s. Folios 12 and 11 (Fig. 44 and 45) each show a yogi with matted locks seated in three-quarter profile. The folios are arranged so that the two yogis face each other across the album's central gutter. From their markings and scant paraphernalia, they appear to be Vaishnavites. Both artworks are likely from the late-Akbar period but were reused in Dara Shikoh's album in the 1630s. Folio 11 is the more intricately drawn, complex composition of the two and is attributed to Basavan, painter of some of the finest individual portraits of yogis and Sufis in the Akbar and Jahangir periods. In both *Dara Shikoh Album* folios, established conventions marking sanctity are immediately recognizable. Both yogis are seated on raised platforms in front of flowing water. The yogi in folio 12 is seated under the shade of a large tree that emerges behind him. Both have animal skins as mats. In folio 11, the receding city in the background enhances the wilderness of the yogi's surroundings. The cloudlike rock formations accentuate that distance. The yogi himself, with a trailing, wispy beard and long locks wound around his head like a turban, sits in the lotus position reading from a sacred Hindu book, or a *pothī*, shown in the typical horizontal format. Directly under the slender tree next to the yogi is a lion-head spout and a pair of ducks gazing at each other in the channel gushing from the mouth.

Symbols of devotion—some persisting from earlier periods—were perpetuated, developed, and refined during the Akbar and Jahangir eras. They

FIGURE 44 A Vaishnava yogi, from the *Dara Shikoh Album*, ca. 1630–34. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 15 × 8.3. British Library, London
© THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD, ADD.OR.3129, F. 12

FIGURE 45 A Vaishnava yogi, from the *Dara Shikoh Album*, ca. 1630–34. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 14.9 by 8.2 cm. British Library, London
© THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD, ADD.OR.3129, F. 11V

provided the ideal format for the expression of Dara Shikoh's own interests in spirituality. Apart from iconography, the stylistic and compositional innovations of the early Mughal period also greatly contributed to the articulation of seventeenth-century representations of Muslim saints. These innovations included the mingling of earlier pictorial conventions with newer ones: for example, the stacked compositional registers, bright color palette, and figural profiles seen in the *Chandāyan* folios of the early-sixteenth century (Fig. 21) merged with visual devices like spatial recession, illusionistic volume, and the detailed rendering derived from European styles. The Persian artists who had trained local painters in Akbar's court also injected into this new artistic milieu the refinement of the Iranian style of the Safavid period. Folio 23v (Fig. 26) from the *Mṛigāvatī* is a very clear example of this stylistic collaboration at the

FIGURE 46
Rajkunwar begins his journey (with added division lines), from the *Rājkuṇwar Romance*, ca. 1603–4. Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 28.3 × 17.5 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 37.23v)

turn of the century. Following the earlier practice, the vertical page is divided into three horizontal registers, evident although in a more understated composition (Fig. 46). The bottom register includes the stream, the foxes, and the pair of ducks, while the top register contains the large tree and the expansive background. The figure of Rajkunwar is sandwiched in the central register. The strict profile of the protagonist and the use of bright red pigment on his veena and sandals are echoes of earlier painting paradigms. Meanwhile, the pastel greens, pinks, and ochres of the landscape and the knobby rock formations are typical of the Persian school, although made here with a slightly bolder, heavier brush. The spatial recession and naturalism of the figure and the animals suggests European influence. Through this evolving aesthetic language, artists found new ways to introduce visual metaphors that enhanced and deepened the narrative rather than strictly plotting it.

It is important to note that under the patronage of Salim/Jahangir, the artworks, detached from their traditional illustrative function, could stand alone as loaded symbols in the form of album folios. In the *Salim Album*, for example, the image took on as much importance as the word. In these folios, verses and paintings illustrate and complement each other; the image itself carries as much narrative as the text.[71]

71 Rice suggests that "the prose and the poetic inscriptions, of course, are responses to the images, and not the reverse" ("The Emperor's Eye," 45).

In this chapter, by discussing a small selection of key images of yogis in painting from around 1500 to around 1630, I have explored the formation and development of an Indo-Muslim devotional vocabulary. A survey of artworks from this time studied in direct relation to religious literature also provides clear evidence of the phenomenon of interreligious exchange over a period that traverses dynastic divisions. Despite great stylistic innovations of the Mughal era, there were key thematic and iconographic continuities linking the painting of the period with a longer tradition. The figure of the yogi, both in literature and in painting, is a fascinating example of this continuity; one that became a narrative counterpart for the Indian Sufi. By exploring some formative depictions of devotion in Indo-Muslim painting, this chapter provides an important building block to discuss later artworks from the Shah Jahan period and beyond. The visual language established through depictions of Yogis was pivotal for the representation of saints and ascetics in later periods.

Sufis borrowed the garb of the yogi—both literally and metaphorically—because they identified with the ideals of the yogi. They inhabited the same environment, spoke the same language and in some cases even shared practices. Deeply rooted in the larger Mughal elite culture, these are the very sentiments that significantly influenced later patrons, such as Prince Dara Shikoh and Jahanara Begum, and their religious and intellectual personalities in the mid-seventeenth century. Over time, the idea of the renunciate yogi became so deeply embedded in the Indo-Muslim fold that today, in a post-colonial, post-partition, acutely sectarian and politicized era of an "Islamized" Pakistan at perpetual loggerheads with a "Hindutva" India, the yogi continues to resonate in the popular imagination, evoking a deep sense of nostalgia steeped in both spiritual aspiration and a longing for unfettered love and reunion.